

Peter Allason
his book a^o 1697

SEVERAL
SERMONS
AGAINST
Evil-Speaking.

BY
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Cambridge, and one of His MAJESTIE's
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L O N D O N,

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SEVERAL

STYMONS

IN THE

STYMONS

STYMONS

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TO THE
Right Honourable
H E N E A G E
Lord *F I N C H*,
Baron of
D A V E N T R Y,
Lord High C H A N C E L L O U R
O F
E N G L A N D,
A N D
One of His M A J E S T I E ' S
most Honourable Privy Council;

T H O M A S B A R R O W
humbly dedicateth these
S E R M O N S.

Right Honourable

HENRY

Lord of the

Baron of

DAVENTRY.

Lord High Chancellor

of

Great Britain

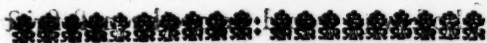
and

of the Duchy of Lancaster

and of the County of

Warwick

Sherriff



The Publisher to the Reader.

THESE *SERMONS* are thought fit to be put together in one *Volume*, because of their affinity to one another, all of them relating to the same Argument, and tending to reform the several Vices of the Tongue. The *Two* last indeed, against *Pragmaticalness* and meddling in the affairs of others, do not so properly belong to this Subject ; but considering that this Vice is chiefly managed by the Tongue, and is almost ever attended with some irregularity and indiscretion of Speech, they are not altogether so foreign and unfutable to it.

Never were Discourses of this kind more necessary then in this wicked and perverse Generation ; wherein the Vices here reprehended are so very rife, and out of the abundant impiety of men's hearts there proceeds so much *Evil-speaking* of all kinds, in Atheistical Discourses, and blasphemous Raillery, and prophane Swearing ; and when Censoriousness, Detraction, and Slander

The Publisher to the Reader.

are scarce accounted faults, even with those who would seem to be most strict in other parts and duties of Religion.

The *Author* of these *SERMONS* as he was exemplary in all manner of conversation, so especially in this part of it; being of all men I ever had the happiness to know the clearest of this common guilt, and most free from *Offending in Word*; coming as near, as is possible for humane frailty to doe, to the perfect Idea of S. James his *perfect man*. So that in these excellent Discourses of his he hath onely transcribed his own practice. All the Rules which he hath given he most religiously observ'd himself, and was very uneasie when at any time he saw them transgress'd by others in his company.

There is one thing needs excuse, namely, That several things which are more briefly and summarily said in the First Sermon, are repeated in some of the following Discourses: which because it could not well be avoided, but either by wholly leaving out the First Sermon, or very much mangling some of the rest, will, it is hoped, for that reason be easily pardoned.

THE

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your own business.*

IMPRIMATUR

*Hic Liber cui Titulus,
(Ten Sermons, &c.)*

May 28th.
1678.

Geor. Thorp, R^{mo} in
Christo Patri, &
D^{no} D^{no} Gulielmo,
Archiep. Cant. à
Sacris Domesticis.



The First Sermon.

S. JAMES 3. 2.

If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man.

THis Sentence stands in the head of a discourse concerning the Tongue, (that doubtfull engine of good and evil,) wherein how excellent benefits, and how grievous mischiefs, it, as rightly or perversly wielded, is apt to produce, how it is both a sweet instrument of all goodness, and a sharp weapon of all iniquity, is positively laid down, and by fit comparisons illustrated. But secluding all relation to the Context, the words may well be considered singly by themselves: and as such they instruct us, asserting a certain Truth; they direct us, implying a good Duty. They assert that man to be perfect, who offends not in Speech ;

B and

and they consequently imply, that we should strive to avoid offending therein : for to *be perfect*, and to *go on to perfection*, are precepts, the observance whereof is incumbent on us. We shall first briefly explain the Assertion, and then declare its truth ; afterwards we shall press somewhat couched in the Duty.

Deut. 18. 13.
Luk. 6. 40.
Matt. 5. 48.
& 19. 21.
2 Cor. 13. 11.
Heb. 6. 1.

ἐν τῇ ἐν λόγῳ
& πᾶσι.

Psal. 37. 23,
24.

To *OFFEND* originally signifies to *impinge*, that is, to stumble, or hit dangerously upon somewhat lying cross our way, so as thereby to be cast down, or at least to be disordered in our posture, and stopt in our progress: whence it is well transferr'd to denote our being through any incident temptation brought into sin, whereby a man is thrown down, or bowed from his upright state, and interrupted from prosecuting a steady course of Piety and Vertue. By an usual and apposite manner of speaking, our tenour of life is called a *Way*, our conversation *Walking*, our actions *Steps*, our observing good laws *Uprightness*, our transgression of them *Tripping*, *Faultring*, *Falling*.

By *NOT OFFENDING IN WORD*, we may easily then conceive to be under-

understood such a constant restraint, and such a carefull guidance of our Tongue, that it doth not transgress the rules prescribed unto it by Divine Law, or by good Reason ; that it thwarteth not the natural ends and proper uses for which it was framed, to which it is fitted ; such as chiefly are promoting God's glory, our Neighbour's benefit, and our own true welfare.

By *A PERFECT MAN* is meant a person accomplished and complete in goodness, one of singular worth and integrity, a brave and excellent man, Jam. 1. 4. who, as to the continual tenour of his life, is free from all notorious defects, and hainous faults ; like *David*, Act. 13. 22 *fulfilling all God's will, and having respect to all Gods commandments* ; like *Zachary* Psal. 119. 6. and *Elizabeth*, Luk. 1. 6. *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* Thus was *Noah*, thus was Gen. 6. 9. *Abraham*, thus was Job 1. 1. *Job* perfect. This is the notion of *Perfection* in Holy Scripture : Not an absolute exemption from all blemish of Soul, or blame in life ; for such a Perfection is inconsistent with the nature and state of Man here, where none with modesty or with truth can say, *I have made my heart clean, I am* 1 Cor. 20. 9.

Job 9. 20.

Eccles 7. 20.

pure from my sin ; where every man must confess with Job, *If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me ; if I say, I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse.* For, *There is not* (as the Preacher assures) *a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not ; and, In many things we offend all,* is our Apostle's assertion, immediately preceding my Text ; which words may serve to expound these. *In many things,* saith he, *we offend all ;* that is, there is no man absolutely perfect : but *if any man offend not in word,* (that is, if a man constantly govern his Tongue well,) *that man is perfect ;* perfect in such a kind and degree as humane frailty doth admit ; he is eminently good ; he may be reasonably presumed upright and blameless in all the course of his practice ; *able* (as it follows) *to bridle the whole body,* that is, qualified to order all his actions justly and wisely. So that in effect the words import this, That a constant governance of our Speech according to duty and reason is a high instance, and a special argument of a thoroughly-sincere and solid goodness.

The

The truth of which Aphorism may
from several Considerations appear.

I. A good Governance of Speech is
a strong evidence of a good Mind ; of a
mind pure from vicious desires, calm
from disorderly passions, void of dis-
honest intentions. For since Speech is
a child of Thought, which the mind al-
waies travaileth and teemeth with, and
which after its birth is wont in features
to resemble its parent ; since every man
naturally is ambitious to propagate
his conceits, and without a painfull
force cannot smother his resentments ;
since especially bad affections (like
stumme or poison) are impetuous and
turgid, so agitating all the spirits, and
so swelling the heart, that it cannot ea-
sily compose, or contain them ; since a
distempered constitution of mind, as of
body, is wont to weaken the retentive
faculty, and to force an evacuation of
bad humours ; since he that wanteth
the principal wisdom of well ordering
his Thoughts, and mastering his Passions,
can hardly be conceived so prudent, as
long to refrain, or to regulate their de-
pendence, Speech ; considering these
things, I say, it is scarce possible, that

Ecclus 19. 11.
*A fool travai-
leth with a
word, as a
woman in la-
bour of a
child.*

he which commonly thinks ill, should constantly either be well silent, or speak well. To conceal fire, to check lightning, to confine a whirlwind, may perhaps be no less fecible, then to keep within due compass the exorbitant motions of a Soul, wherein Reason hath lost its command, so that *quà data porta*, where the next passage occurs, they should not rush forth, and vent themselves. A vain Mind naturally will bubble forth or fly out in frothy expressions; Wrath burning in the breast will flame out, or at least smoak through the mouth; rancorous impostumes of Spite and Malice will at length discharge purulent matter; Lust boiling within will soon foam out in lewd discourse. If the fountain it self is polluted, or infected, how can the streams be clear, or wholsome? *How can ye, being evil, speak good things?* (saith our Lord) *for from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man (addeth he) out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things: ἐκβάλλει ποταμὸν, he casteth forth ill things,* as a fountain doth its waters by a natural and necessary ebullition.

It

It is true, that in some particular cases, or at some times, a foul heart may be disguised by fair words, or covered by demure reservedness: Shame, or Fear, or crafty Design, may often repress the declaration of ill thoughts and purposes. But such fits of dissimulation cannot hold; men cannot abide quiet under so violent constraints; the intestine jars, or unkindly truces, between Heart and Tongue (those natural friends) cannot be perpetual, or very durable: No man can hold his breath long, or live without evaporating through his mouth those steams of passion which arise from flesh and blood. *My heart was hot within me,* Psal. 39. 3. *while I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue,* saith David, expressing the difficulty of obstructing the eruption of our Affections into Language. Hence it is, that Speech is commonly judged the truest character of the mind, and the surest test of inward worth; as that which discloseth the *hidden man of the heart*, which unlocketh the closets of the breast, which draws the Soul out of her dark recesses into open light and view, which rendereth our thoughts visible, and our intentions

Ἀντὶ τοῦ
ἐκκλινῆς ἐν
λόγῳ γινώσκου
τοῦ.

1 Pet. 3. 4.

tentions palpable. Hence, *Loquere, ut te videam*, Speak, that I may see you, or know what kind of man you are, is a saying which all men, at first meeting, do in their hearts direct one to another: neither commonly doth any man require more to ground a judgment upon concerning the worth or ability of another, then opportunity of hearing him to discourse for a competent time: yea often, before a man hath spoken ten words, his mind is caught, and a formal sentence is passed upon it. Such a strict affinity and connexion do all men suppose between Thoughts and Words.

2. From hence, that the use of Speech is it self a great ingredient into our Practice, and hath a very general influence upon whatever we doe, may be inferred, that whoever governeth it well, cannot also but well order his whole life. The extent of Speech must needs be vast, since it is nearly commensurate to Thought it self, which it ever closely traceth, widely ranging through all the immense variety of objects; so that men almost as often speak incogitantly, as they think silently. Speech is indeed the Rudder that steere
 reth

reth humane affairs, the Spring that set-
teth the wheels of action on going ; the
Hands work, the Feet walk, all the
Members and all the Senses act by its di-
rection and impulse ; yea, most Thoughts
are begotten, and most Affections stir-
red up thereby : it is it self most of our
employment, and what we doe beside
it, is however guided and moved by it.
It is the profession and trade of many,
it is the practice of all men, to be in a
manner continually talking. The chief
and most considerable sort of men ma-
nage all their concernments meerly by
Words ; by them Princes rule their Sub-
jects, Generals command their Armies,
Senatours deliberate and debate about
the great matters of State : by them Ad-
vocates plead causes, and Judges de-
cide them ; Divines perform their offi-
ces, and minister their instructions ;
Merchants strike up their bargains, and
drive on all their traffick. Whatever
almost great or small is done in the
Court or in the Hall, in the Church or
at the Exchange, in the School or in
the Shop, it is the Tongue alone that
doeth it : 'tis the force of this little ma-
chine, that turneth all the humane
world about. It is indeed the use of
this

this strange organ which rendreth humane life, beyond the simple life of other creatures, so exceedingly various and compounded; which creates such a multiplicity of business, and which transacts it; while by it we communicate our secret conceptions, transfusing them into others; while therewith we instruct and advise one another; while we consult about what is to be done, contest about right, dispute about truth; while the whole business of conversation, of commerce, of government, and administration of justice, of learning, and of Religion, is managed thereby; yea, while it stoppeth the gaps of time, and filleth up the wide intervalls of business, our recreations and divertisements (the which do constitute a great portion of our life) mainly consisting therein: so that, in comparison thereof, the execution of what we determine and all other action do take up small room; and even all that usually dependeth upon foregoing Speech, which persuadeth, or counselleth, or commandeth it. Whence the Province of Speech being so very large, it being so universally concerned, either immediately as the matter, or by consequence
as

The First Sermon.

11

as the source of our actions, he that constantly governeth it well, may justly be esteemed to live very excellently.

3. To govern the Tongue well is a matter of exceeding difficulty, requiring not onely hearty goodness, but great judgment and art, together with much vigilance and circumspection; whence the doing it argues a high pitch of Vertue. For since the Tongue is a very loose and versatile engine, which the least breath of thought doth stir, and set on going any way, it cannot but need much attention to keep it either in a steddy rest, or in a right motion. Since numberless swarms of things roving in the fancy do thence incessantly obtrude themselves upon the Tongue, very much application of mind and great judgment are requisite to select out of them those few which are good and fit, rejecting all that is bad, and improper to be spoken. Since continually temptations occur provoking or alluring to miscarriage in this kind, (for beside internal propensions and commotions of Soul, every object we behold, every company we are engaged in, every accident befalling us doth suggest somewhat inviting thereto; the condi-

condition of our neighbour moving us, if high, to flatter, if low, to insult; our own fortune prompting, if prosperous, to boast, if cross, to murmur; any action drawing from us, if it pleaseth us, fond admiration, if it disliketh, harsh censure: since, I say, we are thus at every turn obnoxious to speak amiss,) it must be a matter of huge skill and caution, of mighty industry and resolution, to decline it. We for that purpose need to imitate that earnest and watchfull care of the Holy Psalmist, which he thus expresseth; *I have (saith he) purposed that my mouth shall not offend: and, I said, (saith he again) I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* And thus to maintain a constant guard over his heart and ways, thus in consequence thereof to curb and rule his Speech well, must assuredly be the mark of a very good person. Especially considering, that,

Pfal. 17. 3.

Pfal. 39. 1.

4. Irregular Speech hath commonly divers more advantages for it, and fewer checks upon it, then other bad Practice hath. A man is apt (I mean) to speak ill with less dissatisfaction and regret from

from within ; he may doe it with less controll and less hazard from without, then he can act ill. Bad Actions are gross and bulky, taking up much time, and having much force spent on them, whence men easily observe and consider them in themselves and others : but ill Words are subtile and transient, soon born, and as soon deceased ; whence men rashly utter them without much heed before them, or much reflexion after them. Bad actions have also usually visible effects, immediately consequent on them : but Words operate insensibly and at distance ; so that men hardly discern what will follow them, or what they have effected. There are also frequent occasions of speaking ill upon presumption of secrecy, and thence of indisturbance and impunity ; yea, doing so is often entertained with complacence, and encouraged with applause : the vilest abuses of speech (even Blasphemy, Treason and Slander themselves) may be safely whispered into ears, which will receive them with pleasure and commendation. Bad Language also in most cases is neither strictly prohibited, nor severely chastised by humane Laws, as bad Action is. Whence
ordi-

Psal. 12. 4.

ordinarily the guilt of this misbehaviour seems little or none ; and persons much practising it, both in their own conceit, and in the opinion of others, do often pass for innocent. Men indeed here will hardly discern any rule, or acknowledge any obligation: the Tongue they deem is free, and any words may be dispensed with: it is sufficient if they abstain from doing gross wrong or mischief, they have a right and liberty to say any thing. *Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?* so are men commonly prone to say, with those in the Psalm. Hence whosoever, notwithstanding such encouragements to offend herein, and so few restraints from it, doth yet carefully forbear it, governing his Tongue according to rules of duty and reason, may justly be reputed a very good man. Furthermore,

5. Whereas most of the enormities, the mischiefs and the troubles whereby the Souls of men are defiled, their minds discomposed, and their lives disquieted, are the fruits of ill-governed Speech; it being that chiefly which perverteth justice, which soweth dissensions, which raiseth all bad passions and
ani-

animosities, which embroileth the world in seditions and factions, by which men wrong and abuse, deceive and seduce, defame and disgrace one another, whereby consequently innumerable vexations and disturbances are created among men; he that by well governing his Speech preserveth himself from the guilt, disengageth his mind and life from the inconveniences of all such evils, (from the discreet and honest management thereof enjoying both innocence and peace,) must necessarily be as a very wise and happy, so a very good and worthy person.

6. His Tongue also so ruled cannot but produce very good fruits of honour to God, of benefit to his Neighbour, of comfort to himself: it will be sweet and pleasant, it will be wholesome and usefull; endearing conversation, cementing peacefull society, breeding and nourishing love, instructing and edifying, or chearing and comforting the hearers. His *tongue is health*; His *mouth is a well and tree of life*; His *lips disperse knowledge*; He *shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth*; *Every man shall kiss his lips*: Such (as the Wise-man telleth us) are the effects of innocent,

Prov. 12. 18.
Prov. 10. 11.
& 15. 4. Prov.
15. 7. Prov.
12. 14. & 13.
2, 3. & 15. 23.
Prov. 24. 26.

innocent, sober and well-ordered discourse ; the which do much commend their authour, and declare the excellent virtue of that tree from which such fruits do grow.

7. Lastly, The observation how unusual this practice is, (in any good degree) may strongly assure the excellency thereof. For the rarer (especially in morals) any good thing is, the more noble and worthy it is ; that rarity arguing somewhat of peculiar difficulty in the attainment or the atchievement thereof. Nothing is more obvious to common experience, then that persons, who in the rest of their demeanour and dealings appear blameless, yea who in regard to other points of duty would seem nice and precise, are extremely peccant in this kind. We may see divers, otherwise much restraining and much denying themselves, who yet indulge themselves a strange licentiousness in speaking whatever their humour or their passion dictates. Many, in other respects harmless, (who would not for any thing smite or slay folks,) we may observe with their Tongue to commit horrible outrages upon any man that comes in their way. Frequently persons
very

very punctual in their dealings, are very unjust in their language, cheating and robbing their neighbour of his reputation by envious detraction and hard censure. They who abhor shedding a man's blood, will yet without any scruple or remorse, by calumnious tales and virulent reproaches, assassinate his credit, and murder his good name, although to him perhaps far more dear and precious than his life. Commonly such as are greatly staunch in other enjoyments of pleasure, are enormously intemperate in speaking, and very incontinent of their Tongue: men in all other parts of morality rigorously sober, are often in this very wild and dissolute. Yea, not seldome we may observe, that even mighty pretenders to godliness, and zealous practisers of devotion, cannot forbear speaking things plainly repugnant to God's Law, and very prejudicial to his honour. Thus it is observable to be now; and thus we may suppose that it always hath been. So of his time S. *Hierome* (or rather S. *Paulinus*, in his excellent Epistle to *Celantia*) testifies: *Such a lust* (saith he, concerning the ill-governance of Speech) *of this evil hath invaded the*

*Tanta hujus
mali libido
mentes homi-
num invasit,*

C

minds

ut etiam qui
procul ab ali-
is vitiis re-
cesserunt, in
istud tamen,
quasi in ex-
tremum Dia-
boli laqueum,
incidant.
Ad Celant.

minds of men, that even those who have far receded from other vices, do yet fall in- to this, as into the last snare of the Devil. So it appears, that among all sorts of good Practice, the strict Governance of the Tongue is least ordinary, and consequently, that it is most admirable, and excellent. And this is all I shall say for Confirmation of the Point asserted.

NOW then, as it is our duty to aim at perfection, or to endeavour the attainment of integrity in Heart and Life, so we should especially labour to govern our Tongue, and guard it from offence. To which purpose it is requisite, that we should well understand and consider the nature of those several Offences to which Speech is liable, together with the special pravity, deformity and inconvenience of each: for did we know and weigh them, we should not surely either like, or dare to incur them.

The Offences of Speech are many and various in kind; so many as there be of Thought and of Action, unto which they do run parallel: accordingly they well may be distinguished from the difference of objects which they do speci-

pecially respect. Whence 1. some of them are committed against God, and confront Piety ; 2. others against our Neighbour, and violate Justice, or Charity, or Peace ; 3. others against our Selves, infringing Sobriety, Discretion, or Modesty ; or, 4. some are of a more general and abstracted nature, rambling through all matters, and crossing all the heads of Duty. It is true, that in most, or in all offences of Speech, there is a complication of Impiety, Iniquity, and Imprudence ; for that by all sorts of ill Speaking we sin against God, and break his Commandment ; we injure our Neighbour, at least by contagion and bad example ; we abuse our Selves, contracting guilt, and exposing our selves to punishment : also the general vices of Speech (unadvisedness and vanity) do constantly adhere to every bad word : Yet commonly each evil Speech hath a more direct and immediate aspect upon some one of those objects, (God, our Neighbour, or our Selves,) and is peculiarly repugnant to one of those capital Vertues (Piety, Charity, and Sobriety) unto which all our Duty is reduced. Now according to this distinction, I should, if time would give

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leave,

leave, describe, and dissuade particularly all these sorts of Offence: but (since I must be respectfull to patience, and carefull my self not to offend in Speech) I shall confine the rest of my present Discourse to the first sort, the Offences against Piety; and even of them I shall (waving the rest) onely touch two or three, insinuating some reasons why we should eschew them. These are,

(Psal. 78. 19.
Num. 21. 5.
Job 34. 37.)

I. Speaking blasphemously against God, or reproachfully concerning Religion, or to the disgrace of Piety, with intent to subvert mens faith in God, or to impair their reverence of him. There hath been a race of men (and would to God that race were not even till now continued) concerning whom the Psalmist said, *They speak loftily, they set their mouth against the heavens; who, like the proud Senacherib, lift up their eyes, and exalt their voice against the Holy One of Israel; who, with the profane Antiochus, speak marvellous things against the God of Gods.* This of all impieties is the most prodigiously Gigantick, the most signal practice of enmity towards God, and downright waging of war against Heaven. Of all
weapons

Psal. 73. 8, 9.

Isa. 37. 23.
2 Chron. 32.
19.

Dan. 11. 36.

The First Sermon.

21

weapons formed against God, the Tongue Iſa. 54. 17. most notoriously doth impugn him : for we cannot reach Heaven with our hands, or immediately assault God by our actions : other ill practice indeed obliquely, or by consequence dishonoureth God, and defameth goodness ; but profane Discourse is directly levelled at them, and doth immediately touch them, as its formal objects. Now doing thus argueth an extremity both of folly and naughtiness : for he that doeth it, either believeth the existence of God, and the truth of Religion ; or he distrusts them. If he doth believe them, what a desperate madness is it in him, advisedly to invite certain mischief to his home, and pull down heaviest vengeance on his head, by opposing the irresistible power, and provoking the inflexible justice of God ? What an abominable villany and baseness is it, thus to abuse God's immense goodness and mercy, offering such despight to the Authour of his being, and free donour of all the good he enjoys ? What a monstrous conspiracy is it of stupidity and perverseness in him, thus wilfully to defy his own welfare, to forfeit all capacity of happiness ; to

precipitate and plunge himself into a double Hell, that of bitter remorse here, that of endless pain hereafter ? But if he that reproacheth God and Religion be supposed distrustfull of their being and reality, neither so is he excusable from like degrees of folly and pravity : for, beside the wild extravagance of such disbelief, against legions of cogent arguments and pregnant testimonies, against all the voice of nature and faith of history, against the settled judgment of wise and sober persons, who have studied and considered the point, against the current tradition of all Ages, and general consent of mankind ; all which to withstand, no less demonstrateth high indiscretion then arrogance ; beside also the palpable silliness which he displays, in causelessly (or for no other cause then soothing a phantastick humour) drawing upon himself the anger and hatred of all men, who are concerned for the interests of their Religion, thrusting himself into great dangers and mischiefs thence imminent to him both from private zeal, and publick law ; beside (I say) these evident follies, there is an unsufferable insolence and horrible malice apparent in this practice : for 'tis no
less

less then the height of insolence, thus to affront mankind in matters of highest consideration, and deepest resentment with it; not onely thwarting its common notions, but vilifying the chief objects of its highest respect and affection, of its main care and concernment; so making the fiercest invasion that can be on its credit, and charging it with greatest fondness. Who can endure, that He, whom he apprehends to be his grand Parent, his best Friend and Benefactour, his great Patron and Sovereign, should in down-right terms be defamed or disparaged? Who can patiently bear, that wherein he placeth his utmost hopes, and supreme felicity, to be expressly slighted or scorned? Who can take the offering to doe this, otherwise then for a most injurious reflexion upon his judgment and his practice? If he cannot believe in God, he may let them alone who do: if he will not practise Religion, he may forbear to persecute it. He cannot pretend any zeal; 'tis therefore onely pride that moves him to disturb us. So may every man with all the reason in the world complain against the profane Talker. Seeing also it is most evident, that hear-

ty reverence of God, and a conscientious regard to Religion, do produce great benefits to mankind, being indeed the main supports of common honesty and sobriety, the sole curbs, effectually restraining men from unjust fraud and violence, from brutish lusts and passions; since apparently Religion prescribeth the best rules, and imposeth the strongest engagements to the performance of those actions, whereby not onely mens private welfare is promoted, and ordinary conversation is sweetned, and common life is adorned, but also whereby publick order and peace are maintained; since (as Cicero with good reason judged) *Piety being removed, 'tis probable that Justice it self* (of all Vertues the best guarded and fortified by humane power) *could not subsist, no faith could be secured, no society could be preserved among men*; it being manifestly vain to fancy, that assuredly without Religious conscience any one will be a good Subject, a true Friend, or an Honest man; or that any other consideration can induce men to prefer duty to their Prince, the prosperity of their Country, fidelity toward their Friends or Neighbours, before their own present

*Haud scio an,
pietate ad-
versus Deos
sublatâ, fides
etiam, & so-
cietas humani
generis, & u-
nâ excellen-
tissima virtus
justitia tolla-
tur. Cic.*

sent interests and pleasure : Since , I say, the credit of Religion is so very beneficial and usefull to mankind, 'tis plain, that he must be exceedingly spitefull and malicious, who shall by profane Discourse endeavour to supplant or shake it. He that speaketh against God or Providence, hath assuredly a pique at Goodness, and would not have it predominant in the hearts of men. He that disparages Religion, doth certainly take his aim against Vertue, and would not have it practised in the world: his meaning plainly is, to effect, if he can, that Men should live like Beasts in foul impurities, or like Fiends in mischievous iniquities. Such an one therefore is not to be taken as a simple embracer of Errour, but as a spitefull designer against common Good. For indeed, were any man assured (as none can upon so much as probable grounds think it) that Religion had been onely devised by men, as a supplemental aid to Reason and Force, (drawing them, whom the one could not persuade, nor the other compell, to the practice of things conducible to the publick weal ;) that it were meerly an implement of policy, or a knack to make people loyal to their

*Ut quos ratio non posset,
eos ad officium religio
duceret. Cic.*

their Prince, upright in their dealings, sober in their conversations, moderate in their passions, vertuous in all their doings; it were yet a most barbarous naughtiness and inhumanity in him to assay the overthrow thereof, with the defeating so excellent purposes: he that should attempt it, justly would deserve to be reputed an enemy to the welfare of mankind, to be treated as a pestilent disturber of the world.

II. Another like Offence against Piety is, to speak loosely and wantonly about Holy things, (things nearly related to God or to Religion,) to make such things the matter of sport and mockery, to play and trifle with them, But of this I shall have occasion to speak in another Discourse.

III. Another grand Offence against Piety is rash and vain Swearing in common discourse; an Offence which now strangely reigns and rages in the world, passing about in a specious garb, and under glorious titles, as a gentile and gracefull quality, a mark of fine breeding, and a point of high gallantry. Who, forsooth, now is the brave Spark, and complete Gentleman, but he that hath the skill and confidence (O Heavens!

yens! how mean a skill! how mad a confidence!) to lard every sentence with an Oath or a Curse; making bold at every turn to salute God, fetching him down from Heaven to avouch any idle prattle, to second any giddy passion, to concern himself in any trivial affair of his; yea, calling and challenging the Almighty to damn and destroy him? But somewhat to repress these fond conceits and vile practices, let us, I pray, consider,

I. That Swearing thus is most expressly and strictly prohibited to us. *I* Matth. 5. 34, 37. *say unto you, Swear not at all: But let your conversation be Yea, yea, Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh from evil: so our Lord forbids it. But* Jam. 5. 12. *above all things, my brethren, swear not--- lest you enter into condemnation: so doth Saint James warn against it. And is it not then prodigious, that in Christendome any man should affect to break laws so plain, and so severe; that it should pass here not onely for a tolerable, but even for a commendable practice, to violate so manifest and so important a Duty; that so directly to thwart our Lord himself should be a thing not in use onely, but in credit*
and

The First Sermon.

and request among Christians? What more palpable affront could be offered to our Religion, and to all that is Sacred among us? For, what respect or force can we imagine reserved to Religion, while a practice so indisputably opposite thereto, in a high degree, is so current and prevalent?

2. Again, according to the very nature and reason of things, it is evidently an intolerable Profaneness, thus unadvisedly to make addresses and appeals to God, invoking his testimony, and demanding his judgment about trifles; far more such, then it were a high presumption and encroachment upon the Majesty of a Prince, on every petty occasion to break into his presence, and to assail his ears, dragging him to hear and determin concerning it. Whence the very light of Nature condemns this practice, and even Heathens have loudly declared against it, as derogatory to the reverence of the Deity, and unsuitable to the gravity of a worthy man.

3. Swearing indeed is by our Holy Oracles worthily represented to us, as an especial piece of Worship and Devotion toward God; wherein, duely performed, we piously acknowledge his
chief

chief Attributes, and singular Prerogatives : (his being every-where present, and conscious of all we say or doe ; his Goodness, and Fidelity, in favouring truth, and protecting right ; his Justice, in rewarding veracity and equity, in avenging falshood and iniquity ; his being the Supreme Lord of all persons, and last Judge in all causes : to signify and avow these things to God's glory, Swearing was instituted, and naturally serveth :) wherefore as all other acts of Devotion, so this grand one especially should never be performed without all serious consideration and humble reverence ; the cause should be certainly just and true, the matter worthy and weighty, the manner grave and solemn, the mind framed to earnest attention, and furnished with devout affections. Those conditions are always carefully to be observed, which the Prophet intimates, when he chargeth thus ; *Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.* It is therefore horrible mockery, and profanation of a most sacred ordinance, when men presume to use it without any care or consideration, without any respect or awe, upon any slight or vain occasion.

Jer. 4. 2.

4. The

4. The doing so is also very prejudicial to humane Society; for the decision of Right, the security of Government, and the preservation of Peace, do much depend upon an awfull regard to Oaths; and therefore upon their being onely used in due manner, and season: the same do greatly suffer by the contempt or disregard of them, and consequently by their common and careless use. They are the surest bonds by which the Consciences of men are tied to the attestation of truth, and observance of faith; the which as by rare and reverent use they are kept firm and fast, so by frequent and negligent application of them (by their prostitution to every light and roysish matter) they are quite dissolved, or much slackned. Whence the publick seems much concerned, that this enormity should be retrenched. For if Oaths generally become cheap and vile, what will that of Allegiance signify? if men are wont to dally with Swearing every-where, can they be expected to be strict and serious therein at the Bar, or in the Church? Will they regard the testimony of God, or dread his judgment, in one place, or at one time, whenas every-where continually

tinually (upon any, upon no occasion) they dare to confront and contemn them?

5. This way of Swearing is also a very uncivil and unmannerly practice: It is not onely a gross rudeness toward the main body of men, who justly reverence the Name of God, and loath such abuses thereof; not onely an insolent defiance to the common Profession and Law of our Country, which disallows and condemns it; but it is very odious and offensive to any particular Society, if at least there be one sober person therein: for to any such person (who retains a sense of goodness, or is any-wise concerned for God's honour) no language or behaviour can be more disgustfull; nothing can more grate the ears or fret the heart of such an one, then this kind of talk: to give him the Lie were a complement, to spit in his face were an obligation, in comparison thereto. Wherefore 'tis a wonder, that any person, having in him a spark of ingenuity, or at all pretending to good manners, should find in his heart or deign to use it.

6. This practice also much derogateth from the credit of him that useth it, rendring

rendering the truth of what-ever he says in reason and justice suspected. For he that is so void of Conscience, as to swear vainly, what can engage him to speak truly? He that is so loose in one such point of obedience to God and Reason, why should we conceive him strict in regard to another?

*Tantus in te
fit veri amor,
ut quicquid
dixeris, ju-
ratum putes.
Hier.*

7. It can be surely no wrong to distrust him, since he implies himself not to be, even in his own opinion, a credible person; since he judges not his own bare affirmation to deserve belief. For why, if he takes his word to be competently good, doth he back it with such Asseverations? why unprovoked calls he God to witness, if he thinks his own honesty sufficient to assure the truth of what he says? An honest man, methinks, should scorn thus to invalidate his own credit, or to detract from the authority of his word, which should stand firm upon it self, and not want an Oath to support it.

8. To excuse this, the Swearer must be forced to confess another ugly fault in speaking, that is, impertinence, or using of wast and insignificant words; to be charged wherewith he is indeed however unavoidably liable. For Oaths,

as

as they pass commonly, are meer excrescencies of Speech, which do nothing else but encumber and deform it: they embellish discourse, just as a wen or a scab does beautifie a face; as a spot or a patch does adorn a garment. For to what purpose (I pray) is God's Name haled into our idle talk? why should we so often mention him, when we never mean any thing about him? Into every sentence to foist a dog, or a horse, would altogether be as proper and pertinent. These superfluous words signify nothing, but that the speaker little skilleth the use of speech, or the rule of conversation; but meaneth to prate any thing without wit or judgment; that his fancy is very beggarly, and craves the aid of any impertinency to relieve it. One would think, that a man of sense should grutch to lend his ears, or incline his attention to such putid stuff; that without nauseating he should not endure to see men lavish time, and squander breath so frivolously.

περὶ ἀνα-
παύσεως λό-
γῳ. Hier.

9. In fine, this Offence is particularly most inexcusable, in that it scarce hath any temptation to it, or bringeth with it any advantage; so that it is unaccountable what (beside meer vanity

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or

or perverseness) should dispose men thereto. It gratifieth no sense, it yieldeth no profit, it procureth no honour : for the sound of it is not very melodious, nor surely was any man ever preferred for it, or got an estate thereby ; it rather to any good ear maketh a horrid and jarring noise, it rather produceth displeasure, dammage, and disgrace.

Isa. 52. 3.

Wherefore of all dealers in sin the Swearer is apparently the silliest, and maketh the worst bargains for himself : for he sinneth *gratis*, and (like those in the Prophet) *sellet his soul for nothing*. An Epicure hath some reason, and an Extortioner is a man of wisdom, if compared to him ; for they enjoy some pleasure, or acquire some gain here, in lieu of their Salvation hereafter. But he offends Heaven, and abandons happiness, he knows not why, nor for what ; a fond humour possesseth him, he inconsiderately follows a herd of fopps, he affects to play the Ape ; that is all he can say for himself. Let me be pardoned, if just indignation against a wickedness so contemptible, so hainous, and so senseless, and withall so notorious, and so rise among us, doth extort from me language somewhat tart and vehement.

If

If men would then but a little consider things, surely this scurvy fashion would be soon discarded, much fitter for the scumme of the people, then for the flower of the Gentry; yea rather, much below any man endued with a scrap of Reason, not to say with a grain of Religion. Could we bethink our selves, certainly modest, sober and pertinent Discourse would appear far more generous and manly, then such wild Hectoring God Almighty, such rude insulting over the received Laws, such ruffianly swaggering against sobriety and goodness. If Gentlemen would regard the Vertues of their ancestours, (that gallant Courage, that solid Wisdom, that noble Courtesy, which first advanced their Families, and severed them from the vulgar,) this degenerate wantonness and dirtiness of Speech would return to the dunghill, or rather (which God grant) would be quite banished from the world.

Finally, as to this whole Point, about not offending in our Speech against Piety, we should consider, that as we our selves, with all our members and

D 2

powers,

powers, were chiefly designed and framed to serve and glorify our Maker; (it being withall the greatest perfection of our nature, and the noblest privilege thereof so to doe;) so especially our Tongue and Speaking faculty were given us to declare our admiration and reverence of him, to express our love and gratitude toward him, to celebrate his praises, to acknowledge his benefits, to promote his honour and service. This consequently is the most proper and worthy use thereof; from this it becomes in effect what the Psalmist so often terms it, our *glory*, and the best member we have; as that whereby we far excell all creatures here below; that whereby we consort with the blessed Angels above, in distinct utterance of praise to our Creatour. Wherefore applying it to any impious discourse, (tending any-wise to the dishonour of God, or disparagement of Religion,) is a most unnatural abuse thereof, and a vile ingratitude toward him that gave it to us. From which, and from all other offences, God in his mercy preserve us all, through *Jesus*

Psal. 16. 9.
 & 30. 12.
 & 57. 8.
 & 108. 1.

The First Sermon.

37

For Christ our Lord, unto whom for
ever with heart and tongue let us
strive to render all glory and praise.

AMEN.

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The

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The Second Sermon.

EPHES. 5. 4.

—*Nor foolish talking, nor jesting,
which are not convenient.*

MOral and political Aphorisms are seldome couched in such terms, that they should be taken as they sound precisely, or according to the widest extent of signification ; but do commonly need exposition, and admit exception : otherwise frequently they would not onely clash with reason and experience, but interfere, thwart and supplant one another. The best Masters of such wisdom are wont to interdict things, apt by unseasonable or excessive use to be perverted, in general forms of speech, leaving the restrictions, which the case may require or bear, to be made by the hearers or interpreters discretion : whence many

D 4 seemingly

seemingly-formal prohibitions are to be received onely as sober cautions. This observation may be particularly supposed applicable to this precept of *S. Paul*, which seemeth universally to forbid a practice, commended (in some cases and degrees) by Philosophers as virtuous, not disallowed by Reason, commonly affected by men, often used by wise and good persons; from which consequently if our Religion did wholly debar us, it would seem chargeable with somewhat too uncouth austerity and sourness: from imputations of which kind as in its temper and frame it is really most free, (it never quenching natural light, or cancelling the dictates of sound Reason, but confirming and improving them;) so it carefully declineth them, injoyning us, that *if there be any things* *περσφιλῆ*, (lovely, or gratefull to men,) *any things* *εὖρημα*, (of good report and repute,) *if there be any vertue and any praise*, (any thing in the common apprehensions of men held worthy and laudable,) we should *mind those things*, that is, should yield them a regard answerable to the esteem they carry among rational and sober persons,

Whence

Οἱ μὴ ὁπεί-
τες μὴ δὲν γα-
λοῖον, τίς τε
λέγεισι δὲ
γαίνοντες, ἀ-
γρίοι καὶ σκλη-
ροὶ δίκασιν
εἶ). *Arift.*
Eth. 4. 8.

Phil. 4. 8.

Whence it may seem requisite so to interpret and determine S. *Paul's* meaning here concerning *Entrapelia*, (that is, facetious speech, or raillery, by our Translatours rendred *Jesting*,) that he may consist with himself, and be reconciled to *Aristotle*, who placeth this practice in the rank of Vertues; or that Religion and Reason may well accord in the case; supposing, that if there be any kind of Facetiousness innocent and reasonable, conformable to good manners, (regulated by common sense, and consistent with the tenour of Christian Duty, that is, not transgressing the bounds of Piety, Charity, and Sobriety,) Saint *Paul* did not intend to discountenance or prohibit that kind.

For thus expounding and limiting his intent, we have some warrant from himself, some fair intimations in the words here. For first, what sort of facetious speech he aimeth at, he doth imply by the fellow he coupleth therewith; *μαρολογία*, (saith he) ἢ *ὑπεραπλία*, foolish talking, or facetiousness: such Facetiousness therefore he toucheth as doth include Folly, in the matter or manner thereof. Then he farther determineth it, by adjoyning a peculiar quality

quality thereof, unprofitableness, or impertineney; τὰ μὴ ἀνήκοντα, which are not pertinent, or conducive to any good purpose: whence may be collected, that it is a frivolous and idle sort of Facetiousness which he condemneth.

But however manifest it is, that some kind thereof he doth earnestly forbid: whence, in order to the guidance of our practice, it is needfull to distinguish the kinds, severing that which is allowable from that which is unlawfull; that so we may be satisfied in the case, and not on the one hand ignorantly transgress our duty, nor on the other trouble our selves with scruples, others with censures, upon the use of warrantable liberty therein.

And such a resolution seemeth indeed especially needfull in this our Age, (this pleasant and jocular Age,) which is so infinitely addicted to this sort of speaking, that it scarce doth affect or prize any thing near so much; all reputation appearing now to vail and stoop to that of being a Wit: to be learned, to be wise, to be good, are nothing in comparison thereto; even to be noble and rich are inferiour things, and

and afford no such glory. Many at least, to purchase this glory, (to be deemed considerable in this faculty, and enrolled among the Wits,) do not onely *make shipwreck of conscience*, abandon Vertue, and forfeit all pretences to wisdom; but neglect their estates, and prostitute their honour: so to the private dammage of many particular persons, and with no small prejudice to the publick, are our Times possessed and transported with this humour. To repress the excess and extravagance whereof, nothing in way of discourse can serve better, then a plain declaration when and how such a practice is allowable or tolerable; when it is wicked and vain, unworthy of a man endued with Reason, and pretending to honesty or honour.

This I shall in some measure endeavour to perform.

But first it may be demanded what the thing we speak of is, or what this Facetiousness doth import. To which question I might reply as *Democritus* did to him that asked the definition of a Man, *'Tis that which we all see and know*: any one better apprehends what it is by acquaintance, then I can inform him

him by description. It is indeed a thing so versatil and multiform, appearing in so many shapes, so many postures, so many garbs, so variously apprehended by several eyes and judgments, that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain notion thereof, then to make a pourtrait of *Proteus*, or to define the figure of the fleeting Air. Sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in seasonable application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale: sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound: sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of humourous expression; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude; sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer, in a quirkish reason, in a shrewd intimation, in cunningly diverting, or cleverly retorting an objection: sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart Irony, in a lusty Hyperbole, in a startling Metaphor, in a plausible reconciling of contradictions, or in acute Nonsense: sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeited speech, a mimical look or gesture passeth

*Eadem qua, si
imprudenti-
bus excidunt,
stulta sunt, si
simulamus,
venusta cre-
duntur.*
Quint. 6. 3.

passeth for it : sometimes an affected simplicity , sometimes a presumptuous bluntness giveth it being : sometimes it riseth onely from a lucky hitting upon what is strange, sometimes from a crafty wresting obvious matter to the purpose : often it consisteth in one knows not what , and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable, being answerable to the numberless roving of fancy, and windings of language. It is, in short, a manner of speaking out of the simple and plain way, (such as Reason teacheth and proveth things by,) which by a pretty surprizing uncouthness in conceit or expression doth affect and amuse the fancy, stirring in it some wonder , and breeding some delight thereto. It raiseth Admiration, as signifying a nimble sagacity of apprehension, a special felicity of invention, a vivacity of spirit , and reach of wit more then vulgar : it seeming to argue a rare quickness of parts, that one can fetch in remote conceits applicable ; a notable skill , that he can dexterously accommodate them to the purpose before him ; together with a lively briskness of humour, not apt to damp those sportfull

Et hercle omnis falsè dicendi ratio in eo est, ut aliter quàm est verum verumque dicatur. Quint.

Eth. 4. 8.

Εὐτελής πελος

λίγεται ὁ

τοιχίλας, ὁ

παντελευπός,

ὁ ἄστατος, ὁ

εὐκόλος, ὁ

πάντα γινώ-

σκων. Chrys.

in Eph. Or.

17.

sportful flashes of imagination. (Whence in *Aristotle* such persons are termed ὀπιδέξιοι, *dexterous* men; and εὐτροποι, men of facil or versatil manners, who can *easily turn* themselves to all things, or turn all things to themselves.) It also procureth Delight, by gratifying curiosity with its rareness, or semblance of difficulty; (as monsters, not for their beauty, but their rarity; as juggling tricks, not for their use, but their abstruseness, are beheld with pleasure;) by diverting the mind from its road of serious thoughts; by instilling gayety and airiness of spirit; by provoking to such dispositions of spirit in way of emulation or complaisance; and by seasoning matters, otherwise distastfull or insipid, with an unusual, and thence gratefull tang.

But saying no more concerning what it is, and leaving it to your imagination and experience to supply the defect of such explication, I shall address myself to shew, first, when and how such a manner of speaking may be allowed; then, in what matters and ways it should be condemned.

I. Such

I. Such Facetiousness is not absolutely unreasonable or unlawfull, which ministreth harmless divertisement, and delight to conversation: (harmless, I say, that is, not intrenching upon Piety, not infringing Charity or Justice, not disturbing Peace.) For Christianity is not so tetical, so harsh, so envious, as to bar us continually from innocent, much less from wholesome and usefull pleasure, such as humane life doth need or require. And if jocular discourse may serve to good purposes of this kind; if it may be apt to raise our drooping spirits, to allay our irksome cares, to whet our blunted industry, to recreate our minds being tired or cloyed with graver occupations; if it may breed alacrity, or maintain good humour among us; if it may conduce to sweeten conversation, and endear society; then is it not inconvenient, or unprofitable. If for those ends we may use other recreations, employing on them our ears and eyes, our hands and feet, our other instruments of sense and motion; why may we not as well to them accommodate our organs of speech, and interior sense? Why should those
games

Δοκ. § 2. η
ἀνθρώπων ἐν
τῇ ταπεινότητι
τῆς εἰς τὴν γαλήνην
ἀναγκαστοί.
Arist. Eth.
4. 8.

Danda est re-
missio animis;
meliores ac-
tioresque requi-
eti surgent,
&c. Sen. de
Tranq. 15.

games which excite our wits and fancies be less reasonable, then those whereby our grosser parts and faculties are exercised? Yea, why are not those more reasonable, since they are performed in a manly way, and have in them a smack of Reason; seeing also they may be so managed, as not onely to divert and please, but to improve and profit the mind, rousing and quickning it, yea sometimes enlightning and instructing it, by good sense conveyed in jocular expression?

—riden-
tem dicere
verum Quid
vetat?

It would surely be hard, that we should be tied ever to knit the brow, and squeeze the brain, (to be always sadly dumpish, or seriously pensive,) that all divertisement of mirth and pleasantness should be shut out of conversation: and how can we better relieve our minds, or relax our thoughts, how can we be more ingenuously chearfull, in what more kindly way can we exhilarate our selves and others, then by thus *sacrificing to the Graces*, as the Ancients call'd it? Are not some persons always, and all persons sometimes, incapable otherwise to divert themselves, then by such discourse? Shall we, I say, have no recreation? or must our
recre-

Θὺς τὰς χά-
ρις ἵνα Πλά-
το Xenocra-
tem morosio-
rem manuit.

recreations be ever clownish, or childish, consisting meerly in rustical efforts, or in petty sleights of bodily strength and activity? Were we in fine obliged ever to talk like Philosophers, assigning dry reasons for every thing, and dropping grave sentences upon all occasions, would it not much deaden humane life, and make ordinary conversation exceedingly to languish? Facetiousness therefore in such cases, and to such purposes, may be allowable.

2. Facetiousness is allowable, when it is the most proper instrument of exposing things apparently base and vile to due contempt. It is many times expedient, that things really ridiculous should appear such, that they may be sufficiently loathed and shunned; and to render them such is the part of a facetious wit, and usually can onely be compassed thereby. When to impugn them with down-right reason, or to check them by serious discourse, would signify nothing; then representing them in a shape strangely-ugly to the fancy, and thereby raising derision at them, may effectually discountenance them. Thus did the Prophet *Elias* expose the wicked

E super-

1 Kings 18.
27.

superstition of those who worshipped *Baal* : *Elias* (saith the Text) *mocked them, and said, Cry aloud ; for he is a God, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleeps, and must be awaked.* By which one pregnant instance it appeareth, that reasoning pleasantly-abusive in some cases may be usefull. The Holy Scripture doth not indeed use it frequently ; (it not suting the Divine simplicity and stately gravity thereof to doeso ;) yet its condescension thereto at any time sufficiently doth authorize a cautious use thereof. When sarcastical twitches are needfull to pierce the thick skins of men, to correct their lethargick stupidity, to rouse them out of their drouzy negligence ; then may they well be applied : when plain declarations will not enlighten people, to discern the truth and weight of things, and blunt arguments will not penetrate, to convince or persuade them to their duty ; then doth Reason freely resign its place to Wit, allowing it to undertake its work of instruction and reproof.

3. Facetious discourse particularly may be commodious for reprovng some vices,

vices ; and reclaiming some persons ;
(as Salt for cleansing and curing some
sores.) It commonly procureth a more
easie accessse to the ears of men, and
worketh a stronger impression on their
hearts, then other discourse could do.
Many who will not stand a direct re-
proof, and cannot abide to be plainly
admonished of their fault, will yet en-
dure to be pleasantly rubb'd, and will
patiently bear a jocund wipe ; though
they abominate all language purely bit-
ter or sour, yet they can relish discourse
having in it a pleasant tartnesse : you
must not chide them as their master, but
you may gibe with them as their compa-
nion : if you doe that, they will take you
for pragmatikal and haughty ; this they
may interpret friendship and freedome.
Most men are of that temper ; and par-
ticularly the Genius of divers persons,
whose opinions and practices we should
strive to correct, doth require not a
grave and severe, but a free and merry
way of treating them. For what can
be more unsutable and unpromising,
then to seem serious with those who
are not so themselves, or demure with
the scornfull ? If we design either to
please or vex them into better manners,

we must be as sportfull in a manner, of as contemptuous as themselves. If we mean to be heard by them, we must talk in their own fashion, with humour and jollity : if we will instruct them, we must withall somewhat divert them : we must seem to play with them, if we think to convey any sober thoughts into them. They scorn to be formally advised or taught ; but they may perhaps be slyly laughed and lured into a better mind. If by such complaisance we can inveagle those Dottrels to hearken to us, we may induce them to consider farther ; and give Reason some competent scope, some fair play with them. Good Reason may be apparelled in the garb of Wit, and therein will securely passe, whither in its native homeliness it could never arrive : and being come thither, it with especial advantage may impress good advice ; making an offender more clearly to see, and more deeply to feel his miscarriage ; being represented to his fancy in a strain somewhat rare and remarkable, yet not so fierce and frightfull. The severity of reproof is tempered, and the reprover's anger disguised thereby. The guilty person cannot but observe, that

he

he who thus reprehends him is not disturb'd or out of humour, and that he rather pitieth then hateth him; which breedeth a veneration to him, and imparteth no small efficacy to his wholesome suggestions. Such a Reprehension, while it forceth a smile without, doth work remorse within; while it seemeth to tickle the ear, doth sting the heart. In fine, many whose foreheads are brazed and hearts steeled against all blame, are yet not of proof against derision; divers, who never will be reasoned, may be raillied into better order: in which cases Raillery, as an instrument of so important good, as a servant of the best Charity, may be allowed.

4. Some Errours likewise in this way may be most properly and most successfully confuted; such as deserve not, and hardly can bear a serious and solid confutation. He that will contest things apparently decided by sense and experience, or who disavows clear Principles of reason, approved by generall consent, and the common sense of men, what other hopefull way is there of proceeding with him, then pleasantly to explode his conceits? To dispute seriously with him, were trifling; to

trifle with him is the proper course: since he rejecteth the grounds of Reasoning, 'tis vain to be in earnest; what then remains but to jest with him? To deal seriously, were to yield too much respect to such a baffler, and too much weight to his fancies; to raise the man too high in his courage and conceit; to make his pretences seem worthy the considering and canvassing. Briefly, perverse obstinacy is more easily quelled, petulant impudence is sooner dashed, Sophistical captiousness is more safely eluded, Sceptical wantonness is more surely confounded in this, than in the simple way of discourse.

5. This way is also commonly the best way of defence against unjust reproach and obloquy. To yield to a slanderous reviler a serious reply, or to make a formal plea against his charge, doth seem to imply, that we much consider, or deeply resent it; whereas by pleasant reflexion on it we signify, the matter onely deserves contempt, and that we take our selves unconcerned therein. So easily without care or trouble may the brunts of malice be declined, or repelled.

6. This

6. This way may be allowed in way of counterbalancing, and in compliance to the fashion of others. It would be a disadvantage unto Truth and Vertue, if their defenders were barred from the use of this weapon; since it is that especially whereby the patrons of Error and Vice do maintain and propagate them. They being destitute of good reason, do usually recommend their absurd and pestilent notions by a pleasantness of conceit and expression, bewitching the fancies of shallow hearers, and inveigling heedlesse persons to a liking of them: and if, for reclaiming such people, the folly of those Seducers may in the like manner be displayed as ridiculous and odious, why should that advantage be refused? It is Wit that wagemeth the war against Reason, against Vertue, against Religion; Wit alone it is that perverteth so many, and so greatly corrupteth the world: It may therefore be needfull, in our warfare for those dearest concerns, to sort the manner of our fighting with that of our adversaries, and with the same kind of arms to protect Goodness, whereby they do assail it. If Wit may happily serve under the banner of Truth

and Vertue, we may impreſt it for that ſervice ; and good it were to reſcue ſo worthy a faculty from ſo vile abuſe. It is the right of Reaſon and Piety , to command that and all other endowments ; Folly and Impiety do onely uſurp them : juſt and fit therefore it is, to wreſt them out of ſo bad hands, to revoke them to their right uſe and duty.

It doth eſpecially ſeem requiſite to doe it in this Age, wherein plain Reaſon is deemed a dull and heavy thing. When the mental appetite of men is become like the corporeal , and cannot reliſh any food without ſome piquant ſawce, ſo that people will rather ſtarve, then live on ſolid fare ; when ſubſtantial and ſound diſcourſe findeth ſmall attention, or acceptance ; in ſuch a time, he that can may in complaiſance, and for faſhion's ſake, vouchſafe to be facetious ; an ingenuous vein coupled with an honeſt mind may be a good talent ; he ſhall employ Wit commendably, who by it can further the intereſts of Goodneſſe, alluring men firſt to liſten, then inducing them to conſent unto its wholeſome dictates and precepts.

Since

Since men are so irreclaimably disposed to mirth and laughter, it may be well to set them in the right pin, to divert their humour into the proper chanel, that they may please themselves in deriding things which deserve it, ceasing to laugh at that which requireth reverence or horror.

It may also be expedient to put the world out of conceit, that all sober and good men are a sort of such lumpish or sour people, that they can utter nothing but flat and drowzy stuff; by shewing them, that such persons, when they see cause, in condescension, can be as brisk and smart as themselves; when they please, can speak pleasantly and wittily as well as gravely and judiciously. This way at least, in respect to the various palates of men, may for variety sake be sometimes attempted, when other means do fail: when many strict and subtle arguings, many zealous declamations, many wholesome serious discourses have been spent, without effecting the extirpation of bad principles, or conversion of those who abett them; this course may be tried, and some perhaps may be reclaimed thereby.

7. Furthermore, the warrantableness of this practice in some cases may be infer'd from a parity of reason, in this manner : If it be lawfull, (as by the best authorities it plainly doth appear to be,) in using Rhetorical schemes, Poetical strains, involutions of sense in Allegories, Fables, Parables, and Riddles, to discoast from the plain and simple way of speech ; why may not Facetiousness, issuing from the same principles, directed to the same ends, serving to like purposes, be likewise used blamelessly ? If those exorbitancies of speech may be accommodated to instill good Doctrine into the head, to excite good Passions in the heart, to illustrate and adorn the Truth, in a delightfull and taking way ; and facetious discourse be sometime notoriously conducive to the same ends ; why, they being retained, should it be rejected ? especially considering how difficult often it may be, to distinguish those forms of discourse from this, or exactly to define the limits which sever Rhetorick and Raillery. Some elegant figures and tropes of Rhetorick (biting Sarcasms, sly Ironies, strong Metaphors, lofty Hyperbole's, Paronomasies,

fies, Oxymorons, and the like, frequently used by the best speakers, and not seldome even by Sacred Writers) do lie very near upon the confines of Jocularity, and are not easily differenced from those sallies of wit, wherein the lepid way doth consist: so that were this wholly culpable, it would be matter of scruple, whether one hath committed a fault or no, when he meant onely to play the Oratour, or the Poet; and hard surely it would be to find a judge, who could precisely set out the difference between a Jest and a Flourish.

8. I shall onely adde, that of old even the sagest and gravest persons (persons of most rigid and severe Vertue) did much affect this kind of discourse, and did apply it to noble purposes. The great introducer of moral wisdom among the Pagans did practise it so much, (by it repressing the windy pride and fallacious vanity of Sophisters in his time,) that he thereby got the name of *ὁ εἰρων*, *the Droll*: and the rest of those who pursued his design, do by numberless stories and Apophthegms recorded of them appear well skilled, and much delighted in this way. Many
great

Eic. de
Prat. 2.

* The two
greatest men
and gravest
Divines of
their time,
S. Greg. Naz.

and S. Basil) could entertain one another with facetious Epistles. (Greg. Naz. Ep. 7. ad Basil. Συ οκῶπτε καὶ διασχεῖ, &c. Et Ep. 8.)

great Princes, (as *Augustus Cæsar* for one, many of whose Jests are extant in *Macrobius*,) many grave Statesmen, (as *Cicero* particularly, who composed several books of Jests,) many famous Captains, (as *Fabius M. Cato* the Censor, *Scipio Africanus*, *Epaminondas*, *Themistocles*, *Phocion*, and many others, whose witty Sayings together with their Martial exploits are reported by Historians,) have pleased themselves herein, and made it a condiment of their weighty businesses. * So that practising thus (within certain rule and compasse) we cannot erre without great patterns, and mighty patrons.

Ἐὶ γὰρ, καὶ
ἐστὶν λέγειν,
καὶ δοκῶ καὶ
ἐμολογῶμαι.

9. In fine, since it cannot be shewn, that such a sportfulness of wit and fancy doth contain an intrinsick and inseparable turpitude; since it may be so cleanly, handsomely and innocently used, as not to defile or discompose the mind of the speaker, not to wrong or harm the hearer, not to derogate from any worthy subject of discourse, not to infringe decency, to disturb peace, to violate any of the grand duties incumbent

cumbent on us, (Piety, Charity, Justice, Sobriety,) but rather sometimes may yield advantage in those respects; it cannot well absolutely and universally be condemned: and when not used upon improper matter, in an unfit manner, with excessive measure, at undue season, to evil purpose, it may be allowed. It is bad objects, or bad adjuncts, which do spoil its indifference and innocence: it is the abuse thereof, to which (as all pleasant things are dangerous, and apt to degenerate into baits of intemperance and excess) it is very liable, that corrupteth it; and seemeth to be the ground, why in so general terms it is prohibited by the Apostle. Which prohibition to what cases, or what sorts of Jestings it extendeth, we come now to declare.

II. 1. All profane Jestings, all speaking loosely and wantonly about Holy things, (things nearly related to God and Religion,) making such things the matters of sport and mockery, playing and trifling with them, is certainly prohibited, as an intolerably-vain and wicked practice. It is an infallible sign of a vain and light spirit, which considereth

von ἀμαρτη-
μα ἵδ'. α-
γει δὲ, ὅτι:
Chrys. Anas-
is:

Ὁ εὐπαι-
στὸς
καὶ ἡ γοργὴ
ἐστὶν τὸ πᾶν
Chrys.

dereth little, and cannot distinguish things, to talk slightly concerning persons of high dignity, to whom especial respect is due; or about matters of great importance, which deserve very serious consideration. No man speaketh, or should speak, of his Prince that which he hath not weighed, whether it will consist with that veneration which should be preserved inviolate to him: And is not the same, is not much greater care to be used in regard to the incomparably-great and glorious Majesty of Heaven? Yes surely: as we should not without great awe think of him; so we should not presume to mention his Name, his Word, his Institutions, any thing immediately belonging to him, without profoundest reverence and dread. It is the most enormous sauciness that can be imagined, to speak petulantly or pertly concerning Him; especially considering, that whatever we do say about him, we do utter it in his presence, and to his very face. *For there is not (as the Holy Psalmist considered) a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.* No man also hath the heart to droll, or thinks raillery convenient in

Psal. 139. 4.

in cases nearly touching his life, his health, his estate, or his fame: and are the true life and health of our Soul, are interest in God's favour and mercy, are everlasting glory and blisse affairs of less moment? are the treasures and joys of Paradise, are the dammages and torments in Hell more jesting matters? No certainly, no: in all reason therefore it becometh us, and it infinitely concerneth us, when-ever we think of these things, to be in best earnest, always to speak of them in most sober sadness.

The proper objects of common mirth and sportfull divertisement are mean and petty matters; any thing at least is by playing therewith made such: great things are thereby diminished and debased; especially Sacred things do grievously suffer thence, being with extreme indecency and indignity depressed beneath themselves, when they become the subjects of flashy wit, or the entertainments of frothy merriment: to sacrifice their honour to our vain pleasure, being like the ridiculous fondness of that people, which (as *Ælian* reporteth) worshipping a Fly, did offer up an Oxe thereto. These things
were

Tit. 2. 8.

Eph. 4. 29.

were by God instituted, and proposed to us for purposes quite different ; to compose our hearts, and settle our fancies in a most serious frame ; to breed inward satisfaction, and joy purely spiritual ; to exercise our most solemn thoughts, and employ our gravest discourses : All our speech therefore about them should be *wholsome*, apt to afford good instruction, or to excite good affections ; *good*, (as S. Paul speaketh) *for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

If we must be facetious and merry, the field is wide and spacious ; there are matters enough in the world beside these most august and dreadfull things, to try our faculties, and please our humour with ; every-where light and ludicrous things occur : it therefore doth argue a marvellous poverty of wit, and barrenness of invention, (no less then a strange defect of goodness, and want of discretion,) in those who can devise no other subjects to frolick upon beside these, of all most improper and perillous ; who cannot seem ingenious under the charge of so highly trespassing upon decency, disclaiming wisdom, wounding the ears of others, and their

their own consciences. Seem ingenious, I say ; for seldome those persons really are such, or are capable to discover any wit in a wise and manly way. 'Tis not the excellency of their fancies, which in themselves usually are sorry and insipid enough, but the uncouthness of their presumption ; not their extraordinary wit, but their prodigious rashness, which is to be admired. They are gazed on, as the doers of bold tricks, who dare perform that which no sober man will attempt : they do indeed rather deserve themselves to be laughed at, then their conceits. For what can be more ridiculous, then we do make our selves, when we thus fiddle and fool with our own Souls ; when, to make vain people merry, we incense God's earnest displeasure ; when, to raise a fit of present laughter, we expose our selves to endless wailing and woe ; when, to be reckoned Wits, we prove our selves stark wild ? Surely to this case we may accommodate that of a truly-great Wit, King Solomon ; *I said of laughter, It is mad ; and of mirth, What doeth it ?* Eccles 2. 2.

2. All injurious, abusive, scurrilous Jesting, which causelessly or needlessly
F tendeth

— *Soluto*
Qui captat
rifus homi-
num, famam
que dicacis,
Hic niger est.
Hor. S. 1. 4.

Ὁ δὲ ἑωμό-
 λεγος ἡπίων
 ὅτι τῷ γελοίῳ,
 καὶ ἔτε ἑαυτοῦ
 ἔτε τῶν ἄλλων
 ἀπεχόμενος,
 εἰ γέλῳτα
 ποιήσει. *Arist.*
Eth. 4. 8.

tendeth to the disgrace, damage, vexation, or prejudice in any kind of our Neighbour, (provoking his displeasure, grating on his modesty, stirring passion in him,) is also prohibited. When men, to raise an admiration of their wit, to please themselves, or gratifie the humour of other men, do expose their Neighbour to scorn and contempt, making ignominious reflexions upon his person or his actions, taunting his real imperfections, or fastning imaginary ones upon him, they transgress their duty, and abuse their wits; 'tis not urbanity, or genuine facetiousnesse, but uncivil rudenesse, or vile malignity. To doe thus, as it is the office of mean and base spirits, (unfit for any worthy or weighty employments,) so it is full of inhumanity, of iniquity, of indecency, and folly. For the weaknesses of men, of what kind soever, (natural, or moral, in quality, or in act,) considering whence they spring, and how much we are all subject to them, and do need excuse for them, do in equity challenge compassion to be had of them; not complacency to be taken in them, or mirth drawn from them: they, in respect to common humanity, should

should rather be studiously connived at and concealed, or mildly excused, then wilfully laid open, and wantonly descanted upon; they rather are to be deplored secretly, then openly derided.

The Reputation of men is too noble a sacrifice to be offered up to vain-glory, fond pleasure, or ill humour; it is a good far more dear and precious, then to be prostituted for idle sport and divertisement. It becometh us not to trifle with that, which in common estimation is of so great moment; to play rudely with a thing so very brittle, yet of so vast price; which being once broken or crackt, it is very hard, and scarce possible, to repair. A small transient pleasure, a tickling the ears, wagging the lungs, forming the face into a smile, a giggle or a humme, are not to be purchased with the grievous distast and smart, perhaps with the real damage and mischief, of our Neighbour, which attend upon contempt. This is not Jestings surely, but bad earnest: 'tis wild mirth, which is the mother of grief to those whom we should tenderly love;

*Vitrea fama.
Hor.*

Prov. 26. 18, 19. *As a mad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in sport?*

οὐκ ἐν ἑσθελοντες τω φιλῶντι—LXX.

F 2

'tis

'tis unnatural sport, which breedeth displeasure in them whose delight it should promote, whose liking it should procure : it crosseth the nature and design of this way of speaking ; which is, to cement and ingratiate society, to render conversation pleasant and sprightly, for mutual satisfaction and comfort.

True Festivity is called *Salt*, and such it should be, giving a smart, but savoury relish to discourse ; exciting an appetite, not irritating disgust ; cleansing sometime, but never creating a

Matt. 5. 13. fore : and, ἐὰν μαγευθῇ, *if it become thus insipid, or unfavoury, it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under foot of men.*

Nimium risus pretium est, si probitatis impendio constat. Quintil.

Εἰ καλὸν τὸ πῶμα, πῶς τοῖς μίμοις ἀφίσταται ; μῖμος γὰρ, καὶ ἐν αἰσχύνῃ ; Chryl.

Such Jestings which doth not season wholesome or harmlesse discourse, but giveth a haut-goust to putrid and poisonous stuff, gratifying distempered palates and corrupt stomachs, is indeed odious and despicable folly, *to be cast out with loathing, to be troden under foot with contempt.* If a man offends in this sort to please himself, 'tis scurvy malignity ; if to delight others, 'tis base servility and flattery : upon the first score he is a buffoon to himself ; upon the

the last, a fool to others. And well in common speech are such practisers so termed, the grounds of that practice being so vain, and the effects so unhappy. *The heart of fools* (saith the Wise-man) *is in the house of mirth*; meaning, it seems, especially such hurtfully-wanton mirth: for it is (as he farther telleth us) the property of fools, to delight in doing harm; (*It is a sport to a fool to doe mischief.*) Is it not in earnest most palpable folly, for so mean ends to doe so great harm; to disoblige men in sport; to lose friends, and get enemies, for a conceit; out of a light humour to provoke fierce wrath, and breed tough hatred; to engage one's self consequently very far in strife, danger, and trouble?

No way certainly is more apt to produce such effects then this; nothing more speedily enflameth, or more thoroughly enrageth men, or sticketh longer in mens hearts and memories, then bitter taunts and scoffs: whence this hony soon turns into gall; these jolly Comedies do commonly terminate in wofull Tragedies.

Eccles 7. 4.

Prov 10. 23.

Fools make a mock of sin. Prov. 14. 9.

Potius amicum quam dictum perdi.

— dummodo risum
Excusiat sibi, non hic cuiquam parcer amico.

Hor. S. 1. 4.

— dicax
idem, & Tibetium acerbis facetiis irridere solitus, quarum apud prepotentes in longum memoria est. Tac. V. Ann. p. 124.

Especially this scurrilous and scoffing way is then most detestable, when it not onely exposeth the blemishes and infirmities of men, but abuseth Piety and Vertue themselves; flouting persons for their constancy in Devotion, or their strict adherence to a conscientious practice of Duty; aiming to effect that which *Job* complaineth of, *The just upright man is laughed to scorn*; resembling those whom the Psalmist thus describeth, *Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their arrows, even bitter words, That they may shoot in secret at the perfect*; serving good men as *Jeremy* was served, *The word of the Lord (saith he) was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily.*

Job 12. 4.

Psal. 64. 3, 4.

Jer. 20. 8.

This practice doth evidently in the highest degree tend to the disparagement and discouragement of Goodness; (aiming to expose it, and to render men ashamed thereof;) and it manifestly proceedeth from a desperate corruption of mind, (from a mind hardned and emboldned, sold & enslaved to wickedness;) whence they who deal therein are in Holy Scripture represented as egregious sinners, or persons superlatively wicked, under the name of *Scorners*; (*λοιμοὺς*, *Pests*, or *pesti-*

pestilent men, the *Greek* Translatours call them, properly enough in regard to the effects of their practice ;) concerning whom the Wise-man (signifying how God will meet with them in their own way) saith, *Surely the Lord* Prov. 3. 34. *scorneth the scorers.* Ἐμπαίχλας, *Scofers,* (or *Mockers,*) Saint Peter termeth them, *who walk according to their own lusts* ; who not being willing to practise, are ready to deride Vertue ; thereby striving to seduce others into their pernicious courses.

This offence also proportionably groweth more criminal, as it presumeth to reach persons eminent in dignity or worth, unto whom special veneration is appropriate. This adjoyneth saucinesse to scurrility, and advanceth the wrong thereof into a kind of sacrilege. 'Tis not onely injustice, but profanenesse, to *abuse the Gods.* Their station Exod. 22. 28. is a sanctuary from all irreverence and reproach ; they are seated on high, that we may onely look up to them with respect ; their defects are not to be seen, or not to be touched by malicious or wanton wits, by spitefull or scornfull tongues : the diminution of their credit is a publick mischief, and the State it

self doth suffer in their becoming objects of scorn ; not onely themselves are vilified and degraded, but the great affairs they manage are obstructed, the justice they administer is disparaged thereby.

Πόρρω δὲ τὸ
το χειραίῃ,
τὸ κωμωδεῖν.
Chrys. in
Eph. Or. 17.
Γλῶσσαν ἔ-
χει, ἔχ' ἵνα
ἔτρεν κωμω-
δίας, ἀλλ'
ἵνα ἐυχαι-
σῇ τὸ
Θεῷ. Idem.

In fine, no Jestings is allowable, which is not thoroughly innocent : it is an unworthy perverting of wit, to employ it in biting and scratching ; in working prejudice to any man's reputation, or interest ; in needlessly incensing any man's anger, or sorrow ; in raising animosities, dissensions, and feuds among any.

Whence it is somewhat strange, that any men from so mean and silly a practice should expect commendation, or that any should afford regard thereto ; the which it is so far from meriting, that indeed contempt and abhorrence are due to it. Men do truly more render themselves despicable then others, when, without just ground, or reasonable occasion, they do attaque others in this way. That such a practice doth ever find any encouragement or acceptance, whence can it proceed, but from the bad nature and small judgement of some persons ? For to any man who is endued with any sense of goodnesse, and
hath

hath a competence of true wit, or a right knowledge of good manners, (who knows——*inurbanum lepidò seponere* Hor. *dicto*,) it cannot but be unfavoury and loathsome. The repute it obtaineth is in all respects unjust. So would it appear, not onely were the cause to be decided in the court of morality, because it consists not with Vertue and Wisdom; but even before any competent judges of wit it self. For he overthrows his own pretence, and cannot reasonably claim any interest in wit, who doth thus behave himself: he prejudgeth himself to want wit, who cannot descry fit matter to divert himself or others: he discovereth a great streightnesse and sterility of good invention, who cannot in all the wide field of things find better subjects of discourse; who knows not how to be ingenious within reasonable compasse, but to pick up a sorry conceit is forced to make excursions beyond the bounds of honesty and decency.

Neither is it any argument of considerable ability in him that haps to please this way: a slender faculty will serve the turn. The sharpnesse of his speech cometh not from wit so much as from choler,

*Obtreſtatio
& livor pro-
nis auribus
accipiuntur :
quippe adula-
tioni ſœdum
crimen ſervi-
tutis, malig-
nitati falſa
ſpecies liber-
tatis ineſt.
Tac. Hiſt. l.
i. init.*

choler, which furniſheth the loweſt inventions with a kind of pungent expreſſion, and giveth an edge to every ſpitefull word : ſo that any dull wretch doth ſeem to ſcold eloquently and ingeniouſly. Commonly alſo Satyrical taunts do owe their ſeeming piquancy, not to the ſpeaker, or his words, but to the ſubject, and the hearers ; the matter conſpiring with the bad nature, or the vanity of men, who love to laugh at any rate, and to be pleaſed at the expence of other mens reputè ; conceiting themſelves extolled by the depreſſion of their neighbour, and hoping to gain by his loſſe. Such customers they are that maintain the bitter Wits, who otherwiſe would want trade, and might go a begging. For commonly they who ſeem to excell this way, are miſerably flat in other diſcourſe, and moſt dully ſerious : they have a particular unaptneſſe to deſcribe any good thing, or commend any worthy perſon ; being deſtitute of right *Idea's*, and proper terms answerable to ſuch purpoſes : their representations of that kind are abſurd and unhandſome ; their Elogies (to uſe their own way of ſpeaking) are in effect Satyrs, and they can hardly more

more abuse a man then by attempting to commend him ; like those in the Prophet, who were *wise to doe ill, but to doe well had no knowledge.* Jer. 4. 22.

3. I passe by, that it is very culpable to be facetious in obscene and smutty matters. Such things are not to be discoursed on either in jest, or in earnest ; they must not, as S. Paul saith, be *so much as named among Christians* : Eph. 5. 3. to meddle with them is not to disport, but to defile one's self, and others. There is indeed no more certain sign of a mind utterly debauched from Piety and Vertue, then affecting such talk. But farther,

4. All unseasonable Jestings is blameable. As there are some proper seasons of relaxation, when we may *desipere in loco* ; so are there some times, and circumstances of things, wherein it concerneth and becometh men to be serious in mind, grave in demeanour, and plain in discourse ; when to sport in this way is to doe indecently, or uncivilly, to be impertinent, or troublesome.

*Vitandum nè
petulans, nè
superbum, nè
loco, nè tem-
pori alienum,
nè prepara-
tum & domo
allatum vide-
atur. Quint.*

It comporteth not well with the presence of Superiours, before whom it becometh us to be composed and modest : much lesse with the performance of

of Sacred offices, which require an earnest attention, and most serious frame of mind.

Μὴ μοι τὰ
 παμπύ, ἀλλ'
 ὦν πύλην δῆ.
 Eurip. Arist.
 Pol. 2. 4.

In deliberations and debates about affairs of great importance, the simple manner of speaking to the point is the proper, easie, clear and compendious way : facetious speech there serves onely to obstruct and entangle businesse, to lose time, and protract the result. The Shop and Exchange will scarce endure Jestings in their lower transactions : the Senate, the Court of justice, the Church do much more exclude it from their more weighty consultations. Whenever it justleth out, or hindereth the dispatch of other serious businesse, taking up the room, or swallowing the time due to it, or indisposing the minds of the audience to attend it, then it is unseasonable and pestilent. Παιζέειν, ἢνα σπευδαίης, *To play, that we may be seriously busy*, is the good rule (of *Anacharsis*,) implying the subordination of sport to businesse, as a condiment, and furtherance, not an impediment or clog thereto. He that for his sport neglects his businesse, deserves indeed to be reckoned among children ; and childrens fortune will attend him, to be pleased

Arist. Eth.
 10. 6.

pleased with toys, and to fail of substantial profit.

'Tis, again, improper (because indeed uncivil, and inhumane) to jest with persons that are in a sad or afflicted condition; as arguing want of due considering, or due commiserating their case: it appears a kind of insulting upon their misfortune, and is apt to foment their grief. Even in our own case (upon any disastrous occurrence to our selves) it would not be seemly to frolick it thus; it would signify want of due regard to the frowns of God, and the strokes of his hand; it would crosse the Wise-man's advice, *In the day of prosperity be joyfull, but in the day of adversity consider.*

Adversus miseros inhumanus est jocus.
Quint.

Eccles 7. 14.

It is also not seasonable, or civil, to be jocund in this way with those who desire to be serious, and like not the humour. Jocularity should not be forcibly obtruded, but by a kindly conspiracy (or tacit compact) slip into conversation: consent and complaisance give all the life thereto. Its design is to sweeten and ease society: when to the contrary it breedeth offence or encumbrance, it is worse then vain and unprofitable. From these instances we may

may collect when in other like cases it is unseasonable, and therefore culpable. Farther,

5. To affect, admire, or highly to value this way of speaking, (either absolutely in it self, or in comparison to the serious and plain way of speech,) and thence to be drawn into an immoderate use thereof, is blameable. A man of ripe age, and sound judgment, for refreshment to himself, or in complaisance to others, may sometimes condescend to play in this, or any other harmlesse way : but to be fond of it, to prosecute it with a carefull or painfull eagernesse, to dote and dwell upon it, to reckon it a brave or fine thing, a singular matter of commendation, a transcendent accomplishment, any-wise preferable to rational endowments, or comparable to the moral excellencies of our mind, (to solid Knowledge, or sound Wisdom, or true Vertue and Goodnesse,) this is extremely childish, or brutish, and far below a man. What can be more absurd, then to make a businesse of play, to be studious or laborious in toys, to make a profession or drive a trade of impertinency ? what more plain non-sense can there be, then

then to be earnest in jest, to be continual in divertisement, or constant in pastime; to make extravagance all our way, and sauce all our diet? Is not this plainly the life of a child, that is ever busie, yet never hath any thing to doe? or the life of that mimical brute, which is always active in playing uncouth and unlucky tricks; which, could it speak, might surely passe well for a professed Wit?

Σπουδαζέιν καὶ
πνεῖν παι-
δίας χάριν,
ἡλίστιον παί-
νεται, καὶ λίσαν
παιδικόν.
Arist. Eth.
x. 6.

The proper work of Man, the grand drift of humane life, is to follow Reason, (that noble spark kindled in us from Heaven; that Princely and powerfull faculty, which is able to reach so lofty objects, and to atchieve so mighty works;) not to sooth fancy, that brutish, shallow, and giddy power, able to perform nothing worthy much regard. *We are not* (even Cicero could tell us) *born for play and jesting; but for severity, and the study of graver and greater affairs.* Yes, we were purposefully designed, and fitly framed, to understand and contemplate, to affect and delight in, to undertake and pursue most noble and worthy things; to be employed in businesse considerably profitable to our selves, and beneficial to others:

Neque enim
ita generati
a natura su-
mus, ut ad
ludum jocum-
que facti vi-
deamur; sed
ad severita-
tem potius, et
ad quadam
studia gravi-
ora, atque
majora. Cic.
Off. 1.

others : We do therefore strangely debase our selves, when we do strongly bend our minds to, or set our affections upon such toys.

Especially to doe so is unworthy of a Christian; that is of a person who is advanced to so high a rank, and so glorious relations; who hath so excellent objects of his mind and affections presented before him, and so excellent rewards for his care and pains proposed to him; who is engaged in affairs of so worthy nature, and so immense consequence: for him to be zealous about quibbles, for him to be ravished with puny conceits and expressions, 'tis a wondrous oversight, and an enormous indecency.

He indeed that prefers any faculty to Reason, disclaims the privilege of being a Man, and understands not the worth of his own Nature: he that prizes any quality beyond Vertue and Goodnesse, renounces the title of a Christian, and knows not how to value the dignity of his profession. It is these two (Reason and Vertue) in conjunction, which produce all that is considerably good and great in the world. Fancy can doe little; doeth never any thing

thing well, except as directed and wiel-
ded by them. Do pretty conceits or
humourous talk carry on any businesse,
or perform any work? No; they are
ineffectual and fruitlesse: often they
disturb, but they never dispatch any
thing with good successe. It is simple
Reason (as dull and dry as it seemeth)
which expediteth all the grand affairs,
which accomplisheth all the mighty
works that we see done in the world.
In truth therefore, as one Diamond is
worth numberlesse bits of Glasse; so
one solid Reason is worth innumerable
Fancies: one grain of true Science and
sound Wisedom in real worth and use
doth outweigh loads (if any loads can
be) of freakish Wit. To rate things o-
therwise, doth argue great weaknesse
of judgment, and fondnesse of mind.
So to conceit of this way, signifieth a
weak mind; and much to delight there-
in, rendreth it so: nothing more deba-
seth the spirit of a man, or more ren-
dreth it light and trifling.

ὡς μὴ συμ-
βαίνειν καὶ
ταὺ τὸν ψυ-
χῆς νῆψιν καὶ
εὐσεβελίαν
διαχρῶν.
Basil. Const.
Mon. 12.

Πολλὰς συμ-
βαίνει τὰς
πρὸς τὰ τοι-
αῦτα ἀχρεῖ-
νίας, τὸ ὅτι οὐ
λόγῳ δια-
μαρτάνει,
τῆς ψυχῆς
πρὸς γλῶσσαν
μὴ διαχρῶ-
νίας, καὶ τὸ τῆς
φρονήσεως
συνεῖν καὶ
πεπυκνω-
μὸν κατα-
λύσεως. Ibid.

Locorum frequens usus omne animis pondus, omnemque vim eripiet.
Sen. de Tranq. c. 15. Ἡ εὐσεβελία μαλακὴν ποιεῖ τὸν ψυχῶν
ῥάθυμον, ἀναπηλωκῶν. Chrys. in Eph. 17.

G

Hence

Hence if we must be venting pleasant conceits, we should doe it *as if we did it not*, carelesly and unconcernedly; not standing upon it, or valuing our selves for it: we should doe it with measure and moderation; not giving up our selves thereto, so as to mind it, or delight in it more then in any other thing: we should not be so intent upon it, as to become remisse in affairs more proper or needfull for us; so as to nauseate serious businesse, or disrelish the more worthy entertainments of our minds. This is the great danger of it, which we daily see men to incurr; they are so bewitched with a humour of being witty themselves, or of hearkning to the fancies of others, that it is this onely which they can like or savour, which they can endure to think or talk of. 'Tis a great pity, that men who would seem to have so much wit, should so little understand themselves. But farther,

6. Vainglorious ostentation this way is very blameable. All ambition, all vanity, all conceitednesse, upon whatever ground they are founded, are absolutely unreasonable and silly: but yet those, being grounded on some real ability,

ability, or some usefull skill, are wise and manly in comparison to this, which standeth on a foundation so manifestly slight and weak. The old Philosophers by a severe Father were called *animalia gloriae*, *animals of glory*; and by a Satyrical Poet they were termed *bladders of vanity*: but they at least did catch at praise from praise-worthy knowledge; they were puff'd up with a wind which blowed some good to mankind; they sought glory from that which deserved glory if they had not sought it; it was a substantial and solid credit which they did affect, resulting from successfull enterprises of strong reason, and stout industry: but these *animalcula gloriae*, these flies, these insects of glory, these, not bladders, but bubbles of vanity, would be admired and praised for that which is no-wise admirable or laudable; for the casual hits and emergencies of roving fancy; for stumbling on an odd conceit or phrase, which signifieth nothing, and is as superficial as the smile, as hollow as the noise it causeth. Nothing certainly in nature is more ridiculous then a self-conceited Wit, who deemeth himself some-body, and greatly pretendeth to commendati-

Tertull.

κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν
ὡς ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας
ἀποκρίσας τὴν
μον.

Risus — te-
nissimus in-
genii fructus.
Cic. de O-
rat. 2.

on from so pitifull and worthlesse a thing as a knack of trifling.

7. Lastly, It is our duty never so far to engage our selves in this way, as thereby to lose or to impair that habitual seriousness, modesty, and sobriety of mind, that steddily composednesse, gravity, and constancy of demeanour, which become Christians. We should continually keep our minds intent upon our *high calling*, and grand interests; ever well tuned, and ready for the performance of holy Devotions, and the practice of most serious duties with earnest attention and fervent affection: Wherefore we should never suffer them to be dissolved into levity, or disordered into a wanton frame, indisposing us for religious thoughts and actions. We ought always in our behaviour to maintain, not onely τὸ πρέπον, a fitting *decency*, but also τὸ σεμνόν, a stately *gravity*, a kind of venerable majesty, suitable to that high rank which we bear of God's Friends, and Children; adorning our holy profession, and guarding us from all impressions of sinfull vanity. Wherefore we should not let our selves be transported into any excessive pitch of lightnesse, inconsistent with or pre-

Phil. 4. 8.
1 Tim. 3. 8.

Tit. 2. 10.
*Diffum potius aliquando
perdet, quam
minuet auctoritatem.*
Quint. 6. 3.

prejudicial to our Christian state and
business. Gravity and Modesty are
the fences of Piety, which being once
slighted, sin will easily attempt and en-
croach upon us. So the old *Spanish*
Gentleman may be interpreted to have
been wise, who, when his Son upon a
voiage to the *Indies* took his leave of
him, gave him this odd advice; *My*
son, in the first place keep thy Gravity,
in the next place fear God : intimating,
that a man must first be serious, before
he can be pious.

*Strad. Infam.
Famiani.*

To conclude, as we need not be de-
mure, so must we not be impudent ;
as we should not be sour, so ought we
not to be fond ; as we may be free, so
we should not be vain ; as we may well
stoop to friendly complaisance, so we
should take heed of falling into con-
temptible levity. If without wronging
others, or derogating from our selves,
we can be facetious ; if we can use our
wits in jesting innocently, and conve-
niently ; we may sometimes do it : but
let us, in compliance with *S. Paul's* di-
rection, beware of *foolish talking and*
jesting, which are not convenient.

G 3

Now

Heb. 13. 20,
21.

*Now the God of grace and peace—
make us perfect in every good work to
doe his will, working in us that which is
well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus
Christ, to whom be glory for ever and
ever. Amen.*

The



The Third Sermon.

S. JAMES 5. 12.

*But above all things, my brethren,
Swear not.*

AMong other Precepts of Good life (directing the practice of Vertue, and abstinence from Sin) S. James doth insert this about Swearing, couched in expression denoting his great earnestnesse, and apt to excite our special attention. Therein he doth not mean universally to interdict the use of Oaths; (for that in some cases is not onely lawfull, but very expedient, yea needfull, and required from us as a Duty;) but that Swearing which our Lord had expressly prohibited to his Disciples, and which thence, questionlesse, the *brethren* to whom S. James did write did well understand themselves obliged to forbear, having

G 4 learnt

learnt so in the first Catechisms of Christian institution ; that is, needlesse and heedlesse Swearing in ordinary conversation: a practice then frequented in the world, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles* ; the which also, to the shame of our Age, is now so much in fashion, and with some men in vogue ; the invoking God's Name, appealing to his testimony, and provoking his judgment, upon any slight occasion, in common talk, with vain incogitancy, or profane boldnesse. From such practice the Holy Apostle dehortheth in terms importing his great concernednesse, and implying the matter to be of highest importance: for, *Πρὸ πάντων*, saith he, *Before all things, my brethren, do not swear* ; as if he did apprehend this sin of all other to be one of the most hainous and pernicious. Could he have said more ? would he have said so much, if he had not conceived the matter to be of exceeding weight and consequence ? And that it is so, I mean now, by God's help, to shew you, by proposing some Considerations, whereby the hainous wickednesse, together with the monstrous folly, of such rash and vain Swearing will appear ; the which being laid
to

to heart will, I hope, effectually dissuade and deterr from it.

I. Let us consider the nature of an Oath, and what we do when we adventure to swear.

It is (as it is phrased in the Decalogue, and other-where in Holy Scripture) an *assuming the Name of our God*, and applying it to our purpose, to countenance and confirm what we say.

Exod. 20. 7.
Prov. 30. 9.

It is an invocation of God as a most faithfull Witnesse, concerning the truth of our words, or the sincerity of our meaning.

Gen. 31. 50.
Jud. 11. 10.
1 Sam. 12. 5.
Jer. 42. 5.
Job 16. 19.
Mal. 3. 5.
1 Joh. 5. 9.

Plurima firmanur jurejurando — diis immortalibus interpositis tum judicibus, tum testibus. Cic. de Leg. 2. p. 326.

It is an appeal to God as a most upright Judge, whether we do prevaricate in asserting what we do not believe true, or in promising what we are not firmly resolved to perform.

Gen. 31. 53.
1 Sam. 24. 15.

It is a formal engagement of God to be the Avenger of our trespassing in violation of truth or faith.

1 King. 8. 31,
32. & 2. 23.
& 19. 2.
& 20. 10.
Neh. 5. 12,
13. Ruth 1.

17. 2 King. 6. 31. 2 Sam. 3. 9, 35. & 19. 13. 1 Sam. 14. 44. & 3. 17. & 20. 13.

Num. 30. 2.

Πᾶς ὅστις

εἰς κατὰ

τελευτᾶ τὴν

ἐπιφορὰν.

Plut. in Ca-

pit. Rom.

(p. 491.)

It is a *binding our souls* with a most strict and solemn obligation, to answer before God, and to undergoe the issue of his judgment about what we affirm, or undertake.

Such an Oath is represented to us in Holy Scripture.

Whence we may collect, that Swearing ever doth require great modesty and composednesse of spirit, very serious consideration and solicitous care, that we be not rude and saucy with God, in *taking up his Name*, and prostituting it to vile or mean uses; that we do not abuse or debase his Authority, by citing it to averr falshoods, or impertinencies; that we do not slight his venerable Justice, by rashly provoking it against us; that we do not precipitantly throw our Souls into most dangerous snares and intricacies.

Psal. 99. 3.

καὶ 111. 9.

& 148. 13.

Deut. 28. 58.

For, let us reflect and consider: What a presumption is it, without due regard and reverence to lay hold on God's Name; with unhallowed breath to vent and toss that *great and glorious*, that most *holy*, that *reverend*, that *fearfull* and *terrible Name* of the Lord our God, the great Creatour, the mighty Sovereign, the dreadfull Judge of all the

the world; that Name which all Heaven with profoundest submission doth adore, which the Angelical powers, the brightest and purest Seraphim, without *hiding their faces*, and reverential horror, cannot utter or hear; the very thought whereof should strike awe through our hearts, the mention whereof would make any sober man to tremble? *Πῶς γὰρ ἐκ ἀτοπων*, For how (saith S. Chrysostome) is it not absurd, that a servant should not dare to call his Master by name, or bluntly and ordinarily to mention him; yet that we slightly and contemptuously should in our mouth toss about the Lord of Angels?

Ifa. 6. 2.
Chryf. 'Ar.
sp. 5.

Chryf. 'Ar.
sp. 5. p. 514.

How is it not absurd, if we have a garment better then the rest, that we forbear to use it continually; but in the most slight and common way do wear the Name of God?

Id. 'Ar. sp. 3.
p. 525.

How grievous indecency is it, at every turn to summon our Maker, and call down Almighty God from Heaven, to attend our pleasure, to vouch our idle prattle, to second our giddy passions, to concern his Truth, his Justice, his Power in our triviall affairs?

What

What a wildnesse is it, to dally with that Judgment upon which the eternal doom of all creatures dependeth, at which *the pillars of heaven are astonished*, which hurled down legions of Angels from the top of Heaven and happiness into the bottomless dungeon; the which, as grievous sinners, of all things we have most reason to dread; and about which no sober man can otherwise think, then did that great King, the Holy Psalmist, who said, *My flesh trembleth for thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments?*

Job 26. 11.

Psal. 119. 120.

How prodigious a madnesse is it, without any constraint or needful cause to incurr so horrible danger, to rush upon a curse; to defy that vengeance, the least touch or breath whereof can dash us to nothing, or thrust us down into extreme and endlesse woe?

Who can expresse the wretchednesse of that folly, which so entangleth us with inextricable knots, and enchaineth our Souls so rashly with desperate obligations?

Wherefore he that would but a little mind what he doeth when he dareth to swear, what it is to meddle with the adorable Name, the venerable Testimony,

mony, the formidable Judgment, the terrible Vengeance of the Divine Majesty, into what a case he putteth himself, how extreme hazard he runneth thereby, would assuredly have little heart to swear, without greatest reason, and most urgent need; hardly without trembling would he undertake the most necessary and solemn Oath; much cause would he see *σεβέσθαι ὅρκον*, to adore, to fear an Oath: which to doe the Divine Preacher maketh the character of a Good man; *As (saith he) Eccles 9. 24*
is the good, so is the sinner, and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

In fine, even a Heathen Philosopher, considering the nature of an Oath, did conclude the unlawfulness thereof in such cases. For, *Seeing (saith he) an Oath doth call God for Witnesse, and proposeth him for Umpire and Voucher of the things it saith; therefore to induce God so upon occasion of humane affairs, or, which is all one, upon small and slight accounts, doth imply contempt of him: wherefore we ought wholly to shunn Swearing, except upon occasions of highest necessity.*

Ὁ γὰρ ὅρκος
 μαρτυρεῖ τὴν
 Θεὸν καλεῖ,
 καὶ μεσίτην
 αὐτὸν καὶ ἐγγυ-
 ῆτιν ἐφ' οἷς
 λέγειν περι-
 γράφει τὸ γινώ-
 σκειν ἀνθρώπων
 νοκ καὶ γ-
 μασι (ταύτων
 δὲ εἰπεῖν μα-
 κροῦς καὶ ἐπι-
 τε-

λέει) τὴν Θεὸν παρεγγυῖν, κατὰ φρόνησιν πᾶσι περὶ αὐτὴν ὑπογράφει. διὰ
 αὐτὴν ὁρκιστῆσαι τὸν ὅρκον, &c. Simpl. in Epiſt. cap. 44.

II. We

II. We may consider, that Swearing (agreeably to its nature, or natural aptitude and tendency) is represented in Holy Scripture as a special part of religious Worship, or Devotion toward God; in the due performance whereof we do avow him for the true God, and Governour of the world; we piously do acknowledge his principal Attributes, and special Prerogatives; (his Omnipresence and his Omniscience; extending it self to our most inward thoughts, our secretest purposes, our closest retirements; his watchfull Providence over all our actions, affairs, and concerns; his faithfull Goodnesse, in favouring truth, and protecting right; his exact Justice, in patronizing sincerity, and chastizing perfidioufnesse;) his being Supreme Lord over all persons, and Judge paramount in all causes; his readinesse in our need, upon our humble imploration and reference, to undertake the arbitration of matters controverted, and the care of administering justice, for the maintenance of truth and right, of loyalty and fidelity, of order and peace among men. Swearing doth also intimate a pious trust and confidence in God; as *Aristotle* observeth,

Εὐσεβὲς τὸ
θεῶν τιμὴν
θεῶν ἐπιση-
μεῖν. It is a
pious thing
willingly to
commend our
case or con-
troversie to
God. *Arist.*
Rhet. 1. 48.

Such

Such things a serious Oath doth imply, to such purposes Swearing naturally serveth; and therefore to signify or effectuate them, Divine institution hath devoted it.

God in goodnesse to such ends hath pleased to lend us his great Name, allowing us to cite him for a Witnesse, to have recourse to his Bar, to engage his Justice and Power, when-ever the case deserveth and requireth it, or when we cannot by other means well assure the sincerity of our meaning, or secure the constancy of our resolutions.

Yea in such exigencies he doth exact this practice from us, as an instance of our religious confidence in him, and as a service conducive to his glory: For it is a Precept in his Law, of moral nature, and eternal obligation, *Thou shalt* Deut. 10. 20 & 6. 13. *fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and shalt swear by his Name.* It is the character of a religious man, to swear with due reverence and upright conscience. For, *The King* (saith the Psalmist) Psal. 63. 11. *shall rejoyce in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* It is a distinctive mark of God's people, according

Jer. 12. 16. cording to that of the Prophet *Jeremy*, *And it shall come to passe, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my Name — then shall they be built in the midst of my people.* It is predicted concerning the Evangelical times, *Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear :* and, *That he who blesseth himself in the earth, shall blesse himself by the God of truth ; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth.*

As therefore all other acts of Devotion, wherein immediate application is made to the Divine Majesty, should never be performed without most hearty intention, most serious consideration, most lowly reverence ; so neither should this grand one, wherein God is so nearly touched, and his chief Attributes so much concerned : the which indeed doth involve both Prayer and Praise, doth require the most devotional acts of Faith and Fear.

Marth. 15. 8. We therefore should so perform it, as not to incur that reproof ; *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

When

When we seem most formally to avow God, to confesse his Omnisience, to confide in his Justice; we should not really disregard him, and in effect signify, that we do not think he doth know what we say, or mind what we doe.

If we do presume to offer this service, we should doe it in the manner appointed by himself, according to the conditions prescribed in the Prophet, *Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness: in truth*, taking heed, that our meaning be conformable to the sense of our words, and our words to the verity of things; *in judgment*, having with carefull deliberation examined and weighed that which we assert or promise; *in righteousness*, being satisfied in conscience, that we do not therein infringe any rule of Piety toward God, of Equity toward men, of Sobriety and discretion in regard to our selves.

The cause of our Swearing must be needfull, or very expedient; the design of it must be honest, and usefull to considerable purposes; (tending to God's honour, our Neighbour's benefit, our own welfare;) the matter of

H

it

it should be not onely just and lawfull, but worthy and weighty ; the manner ought to be grave and solemn, our mind being framed to earnest attention, and endued with pious affections futable to the occasion.

Matth. 15.
7, 8.

Otherwise, if we do venture to swear, without due advice and care, without much respect and awe, upon any slight or vain (not to say, bad or unlawfull) occasion ; we then defecrate Swearing, and are guilty of profaning a most sacred Ordinance: the doing so doth imply base hypocrisie, or leud mockery, or abominable wantonnesse and folly ; in boldly invading, and vainly trifling with the most august Duties of Religion. Such Swearing therefore is very dishonourable and injurious to God, very prejudicial to Religion, very repugnant to Piety.

III. We may consider that the Swearing prohibited is very noxious to humane Society.

The great prop of Society (which upholdeth the safety , peace and welfare thereof, in observing laws, dispensing justice, discharging trusts, keeping contracts, and holding good correspondence mutually) is Conscience, or a sense

sense of Duty toward God, obliging to perform what is right and equal; quickned by hope of rewards, and fear of punishments from him: secluding which principle, no worldly consideration is strong enough to hold men fast; or can farther dispose many to doe right, or observe faith, or hold peace, then appetite, or interest, or humour (things very slippery and uncertain) do sway them.

That men should live honestly, quietly, and comfortably together, it is needfull that they should live under a sense of God's will, and in awe of the Divine power, hoping to please God, and fearing to offend him, by their behaviour respectively.

That Justice should be administred between men, it is necessary that testimonies of fact be alledged; and that witnesses should apprehend themselves greatly obliged to discover the truth, according to their conscience, in dark and doubtfull cases.

That men should uprightly discharge offices serviceable to publick good, it doth behove that they be firmly engaged to perform the trusts reposed in them.

H 2

That

That in affairs of very considerable importance, men should deal with one another with satisfaction of mind, and mutual confidence, they must receive competent assurances concerning the integrity, fidelity, and constancy each of other.

That the safety of Governours may be preserved, and the obedience due to them maintained secure from attempts to which they are liable, (by the treachery, levity, perverseness, timorousness, ambition, all such lusts and ill humours of men,) it is expedient that men should be tied with the strictest bands of allegiance.

That controversies emergent about the interests of men should be determined, and an end put to strife by peremptory and satisfactory means, is plainly necessary for common quiet.

Wherefore for the publick interest, and benefit of humane Society, it is requisite, that the highest obligations possible should be laid upon the Consciences of men.

And such are those of Oaths, engaging them to fidelity and constancy in all such cases, out of regard to Almighty God, as the infallible Patron of truth and right, the unavoidable
Cha-

The Third Sermon.

101

Chastiser of perfidiousness and improbity.

To such purposes therefore Oaths have ever been applied, as the most effectual instruments of working them ; not onely among the followers of true and perfect Religion, but even among all those who had any glimmering notions concerning a Divine Power and Providence ; who have deemed an Oath the fastest tie of Conscience, and held the violation of it for the most detestable impiety and iniquity. So that what *Cicero* saith of the *Romans*, that *their Ancestours had no band to constrain faith more streight then an Oath*, is true of all other Nations ; common Reason not being able to devise any engagement more obliging then it ; it being in the nature of things *τελευταία πίστις*, and *ὀχυρώτατον ἀληθείας ἐνέχυρον*, the utmost assurance, the last resort of humane faith, the surest pledge that any man can yield of his trustiness. Hence ever in transactions of highest moment this hath been used to bind the faith of men.

Nullum enim vinculum ad astringendam fidem jurejurando majores arctius esse voluerunt. Cic. de Off. 3.
Dion. Halic. Procop. Di- od. Sic.

Hereby Nations have been wont to ratifie Leagues of peace and amity between each other : (which

Πρὸς ὅς πιστὴν ἡμῶν ὀρκίῳ, καὶ φιλίᾳ. Polyb.

H 3

there-

therefore the Greeks called *ὅρκια*.)

Hereby Princes have obliged their Subjects to loyalty: and it hath ever been the strongest argument to presse that duty, which the Preacher useth; *Eccles 8. 2. I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment, and that in regard of the Oath of God.*

Veget. 2.

Hereby Generals have engaged their Souldiers to stick close to them, in bearing hardships, and encountring dangers.

Hereby the Nuptial league hath been confirmed; the solemnization whereof in temples before God is in effect a most sacred Oath.

Hereon the decision of the greatest causes concerning the lives, estates and reputations of men have depended; so that (as the Apostle saith) *an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* *Heb. 6. 16.*

Indeed such hath the need hereof been ever apprehended, that we may observe, in cases of great importance, no other obligation hath been admitted for sufficient to bind the fidelity and constancy of the most credible persons; so that even the best men hardly could trust the best men without it. For instance,

When

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103

When *Abimelech* would assure to himself the friendship of *Abraham*, although he knew him to be a very pious and righteous person, whose word might be as well taken as any man's, yet, for entire satisfaction, he thus spake to him; *God is with thee in all that thou doest: Now therefore swear unto me here by God, that thou wilt not deal falsely with me.* Gen. 21. 22, 23.

Abraham, though he did much confide in the honesty of his servant *Eliezer*, having entrusted him with all his estate, yet in the affair concerning the marriage of his son, he could not but thus oblige him: *Put, (said he) I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that thou wilt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites.* Gen. 15. 3. & 24. 2. Gen. 24. 2, 3.

Laban had good experience of *Jacob's* fidelity; yet that would not satisfy, but, *The Lord (said he) watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters; no man is with us; see, God is witness between thee and me. The God of Abraham, and the God of* Gen. 31. 49, 50, 53.

H 4 Nahor,

Nahor, the God of their father judge betwixt us.

- Gen. 50. 5. So did Jacob make Joseph swear, that
 Gen. 50. 25. he would bury him in Canaan : and Joseph caused the children of Israel to swear, that they would translate his bones. So
 1 Sam. 20. did Jonathan cause his beloved friend
 14, 15, 17. David to swear, that he would shew kindnesse to him, and to his house for ever. The prudence of which course the event sheweth, the total excision of Jonathan's family being thereby prevented; for, The King ('tis said) spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, because of the Lord's Oath that was between them.

These instances declare, that there is
 (1 King. 1. 51. no security which men can yield comparable to that of an Oath; the obligation whereof no man wilfully can infringe, without renouncing the fear of God, and any pretence to his favour.
 Ezr. 10. 5.
 Neh. 5. 12.
 & 13. 25.)

Wherefore humane Society will be extremely wronged and damnified by the dissolving or slackning these most sacred bands of Conscience; and consequently by their common and careless use, which soon will breed a contempt of them, and render them insignificant, either

either to bind the Swearers, or to ground a trust on their Oaths.

As by the rare and reverent use of Oaths their dignity is upheld, and their obligation kept fast: so by the frequent and negligent application of them, by the prostituting them to every mean and toyish purpose, their respect will be quite lost, their strength will be loosed, they will prove unserviceable to publick use.

If Oaths generally become cheap and vile, what will that of Allegiance signify? If men are wont to play with Swearing any-where, can we expect they should be serious and strict therein at the Bar, or in the Church? Will they regard God's testimony, or dread his judgment, in one place, or at one time, when every-where upon any, upon no occasion they dare to confront and condemn them? Who then will be the more trusted for Swearing? what satisfaction will any man have from it? The risenesse of this practice, as it is the sign, so it will be the cause of a general diffidence among men.

Incredible therefore is the mischief which this vain practice will bring in to the publick; depriving Princes of their

their best security, exposing the estates of private men to uncertainty, shaking all the confidence men can have in the faith of one another.

For which detriments accruing from this abuse to the publick every vain Swearer is responsible; and he would doe well to consider, that he will never be able to make reparation for them. And the publick is much concerned that this enormity be retrenched.

* *Φύσται ἐν πολυρκίᾳ*
Leusperia. Philo in Decal.
Nè quisquam facili juratio-
ne etiam ad perjurium de-
cidisset, & in Ecclesia po-
pulo predicabat, & suos in-
stituerat, nè quis juraret
nec ad modicum quidem.
Posid. in Vit. S. Aug. c. 25.

IV. Let us consider, that rash and vain Swearing is very apt often to bring the practiser of it into that most horrible sin of Perjury. For * *false swearing* (as the Hebrew Wise-man saith) *naturally springeth out of much*

Ὁ δυνεκάς *swearing: and, He* (saith Saint Chrysostome) *that sweareth continually, both*
ὁμνός, &c. *Chrys. Ansp. id. p. 553.* *willingly and unwillingly, both igno-*
Μὴ εἰς τὸ *rantly and knowingly, both in earnest*
καὶ σὺν πίστει, *and in sport, being often transported by*
quidam le- *anger and many other things, will fre-*
gunt, Jac. 5. *quently forswear. It is confessed and ma-*
12. Vid. Grot. *nifest, that it is necessary for him that*
Ὅπως ὁδὸν ὠ- *sweareth much, to be perjurious.* *Ἀμήχανον*
μολογούμενον *χὲν ἴδμεν, ὅτι* *γὰρ, ἀμήχανον, For* (saith he again,) *it*
πολύορκον ἂν
ταύτην ἐπι-
ερπον ἴδῃ. Ib.

it is impossible, it is impossible for a month addicted to swearing, not frequently to forswear. He that sweareth at random, as blind passion moveth, or wanton fancy prompteth, or the Tempter suggesteth, often will hit upon asserting that which is false, or promising that which is impossible: that want of Conscience and of consideration which do suffer him to violate God's Law in Swearing, will betray him to the venting of Lies, which backed with Oaths become Perjuries. If sometime what he sweareth doth happen to be true and performable, it doth not free him of guilt; it being his fortune, rather than his care or conscience, which keepeth him from Perjury.

V. Such Swearing commonly will induce a man to bind himself by Oath to unlawfull practices; and consequently will intangle him in a wofull necessity, either of breaking his Oath, or of doing worse, and committing wickedness: so that Swearing (as S. Chrysostome saith) *bath this misery attending it, that both transgressed and observed it plagueth those who are guilty of it.*

Ἀμύχανον
ἔδ, ἀμύχανον,
σῶμα μεμελε-
τηκὸς ὁμνύ-
ναι, μὴ σιω-
πῶν. Chrys.
Ἀνδρ. 15.
p. 559.

Τὸ τοῦ θε-
οῦ ἔχει ὁ ὅρ-
κος, ὅτι καὶ
ὑποβλαίνον-
ται καὶ ἐν-
λαττοῦται.

κολάζει τὸν ἀλίσκομένον. Chrys. ibid. p. 553.

Of

(1 Sam. 26.
22. David.)
δια τοῦ ὀρ-
κῆς. Matt. 14.
9.

Of this perplexity the Holy Scripture affordeth two notable instances : the one of *Saul*, forced to break his rash Oaths ; the other of *Herod*, being engaged thereby to commit a most horrid murder.

Vid. Chryl.
id'. 'Ανδρ.

1 Sam. 14. 45.

Had *Saul* observed his Oaths, what injury had he done, what mischief had he produced, in slaughtering his most worthy and most innocent Son, the prop and glory of his family, the bulwark of his country, and the grand instrument of salvation to it ; in forcing the people to violate their cross'd Oath, and for prevention of one, causing many Perjuries ? He was therefore fain to desist, and lie under the guilt of breaking his Oaths.

Παρακαλῶ
ὑμᾶς πρὸς κα-
ταλινὸν Ἰω-
άννην λαβόν-
τας -- 'Ανδρ.
ιδ'. p. 552.

And for *Herod*, the excellent Father thus presseth the consideration of his case : Take, (saith he) *I beseech you, the chopp'd-off head of S. John, and his warm bloud yet trickling down ; each of you bear it home with you, and conceive that before your eyes you hear it uttering speech, and saying, Embrace the murderer of me, an Oath. That which reproof did not, this an Oath did doe ; that which the Tyrant's wrath could not, this the necessity of keeping an Oath did effect. For when*

the

the Tyrant was reprehended publickly in the audience of all men, he bravely did bear the rebuke; but when he had cast himself into the necessity of Oaths, then did he cut off that blessed head.

VI. Likewise the use of rash Swearing will often ingage a man in undertakings very inconvenient and detrimental to himself. A man is bound to perform his vows to the Lord, what-ever they be, what-ever dammage or trouble thence may accrue to him, if they be not unlawfull. It is the Law, *That which is gone out of thy lips, thou shalt keep and perform.* It is the property of a Good man, that he sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. Wherefore 'tis the part of a sober man, to be well advised what he doth swear or vow religiously; that he do not put himself into the inextricable streight of committing great sin, or undergoing great inconvenience; that he do not rush into that snare of which the Wise-man speaketh, *It is a snare to a man to devour that which is holy,* (or, to swallow a sacred obligation,) *and after vows to make inquiry,* seeking how he may disengage himself: the doing which is a folly offensive to God, as the Preacher telleth

Deut. 23. 21.

Matt. 5. 33.

Psal. 66. 13,

14.

Deut. 23. 23.

Psal. 15. 4.

Prov. 20. 25.

Ὡς περ πρὸς
παρὰ τὴν
χρησίν, καὶ
δοσμοῖς ἀλλο-
τρίοις συνδε-
σμένοι, &c.
Chrys.

'Ανδρ. 2.

Eccles 5. 4. telleth us ; *When (saith he) thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it ; for he hath no pleasure in fools : pay that which thou hast vowed.* God will not admit our folly in vowing, as a plea or an excuse for non-performance ; he will exact it from us both as a due debt, and as a proper punishment of our impious folly.

For instance, into what losse and mischief, what sorrow, what regret and repentance, did the unadvised vow of *Jephtha* throw him ? the performance whereof (as *S. Chrysostome* remarketh) God did permit, and order to be commemorated with solemn lamentation, that all posterity might be admonished thereby, and deterred from such precipitant Swearing.

Chrys. 'Arsp.
13.

VII. Let us consider, that Swearing is a sin of all others peculiarly clamorous, and provocative of Divine judgment. God is hardly so much concerned, or in a manner constrained, to punish any other sin as this. He is bound in honour and interest to vindicate his Name from the abuse, his Authority from the contempt, his holy Ordinance from the profanation, which it doth infer. He is concerned to take care

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III

care that his providence be not questioned, that the dread of his Majesty be not voided, that all Religion be not overthrown by the outrageous commission thereof with impunity.

It immediately toucheth his Name, it expressly calleth upon him to mind it, to judge it, to shew himself in avenging it. He may seem deaf, or unconcerned, if, being so called and provoked, he doth not declare himself.

There is understood to be a kind of formall compact between him and mankind, obliging him to interpose, to take the matter into his cognizance, being specially addressed to him.

The bold Swearer doth importune him to hear, doth rouze him to mark, doth brave him to judge and punish his wickednesse.

Hence no wonder that *the flying roll*, a quick and inevitable *curse*, doth surprize the *Swearer*, and *cut him off*, as it is in the Prophet. No wonder that so many remarkable instances do occur in history, of signal vengeance inflicted on persons notably guilty of this crime. No wonder that a common practice thereof doth fetch down publick judgments; and that, as the Prophets of old

Zech. 5. 2,
&c.

Chrys. *Ans.*
9. p. 525.
15. p. 565.
19. p. 591.

Jer. 23. 10.
Hos. 4. 3.

old did proclaim, *because of Swearing the land mourneth.*

VIII. Farther, (passing over the special laws against it, the mischievous consequences of it, the fore punishments appointed to it,) we may consider, that to common sense vain Swearing is a very unreasonable and ill-favoured practice, greatly misbecoming any sober, worthy, or honest person; but especially most absurd and incongruous to a Christian.

For in ordinary conversation what needfull or reasonable occasion can intervene of violating this command? If there come under discourse a matter of reason, which is evidently true and certain, then what need can there be of an Oath to affirm it, it sufficing to expose it to light, or to propose the evidences for it? If an obscure or doubtful point come to be debated, it will not bear an Oath; it will be a strange madnesse to dare, a great folly to hope the perswading it thereby. What were more ridiculous, then to swear the truth of a demonstrable Theorem? what more vain, then so to assert a disputable Probleme? Oaths (like wagers) are in such cases no arguments, except

except of filliness in the users of them.

If a matter of history be started, then if a man be taken for honest, his word will pass for attestation; without farther assurance: but if his veracity or probity be doubted, his Oath will not be relied on, especially when he doth obtrude it. For it was no less truly then acutely said by the old Poet, Οὐκ ἀνδρὸς ἔχου πίστις, ἀλλ' ἔχων ἀνὴρ, *The man doth not get credit from an Oath, but an Oath from the man*: and a greater Authour, *An Oath* (saith S. Chrysostome) *doth not make a man credible; but the testimony of his life, and the exactness of his conversation, and a good repute. Many often have burst with swearing, and persuaded no man: others onely nodding have deserved more belief, then those who have sworn so mightily.*

Wherefore Oaths, as they are frivolous coming from a person of little worth or conscience, so they are superfluous in the mouth of an honest and worthy person; yea, as they do not encrease the credit of the former, so they may impair that of the latter.

I

A good

Οὐκ ὅρκος ἀξιόπιστον ποιεῖ, ἀλλὰ εἰς μαρτυρίαν, καὶ πολιτείας ἀκρίβειαν, καὶ ὑπερῷον ἀγαθόν. πολλοὶ πολλάκις διεφθάρησαν ὁμνύουσιν, καὶ ἕδναι ἔπεισαν ἕτεροι δ', ὀπινεύουσιν μόνον, ἀποπιστώτεροι τῶν τοσαῦτα ὁμωμοκόντων ἐπαύνηται. Chrys. Ἀνδρ. ζ'. p. 514.

Δὴ τὸ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος
τενὲν ὅρκου πιστοτέρως φαί-
νεται παρεχόμενος: Socr. a-
pud Max. Serm. 85.

Ὁ τῶν ἀσθεαῖς λόγος ὅρκος
ἔστω ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, ἀκλινοῦς, ἀ-
ψευδέστατος. Philo.

Colendo fidem jurant
(Scythæ; apud Curt. 7.
8.)

Clem. Alex.
Str. 7. p. 524.

Ἦν δ' οὐκ ἀ-
ξιόπιστος σφέ-
δεσθαι. ὥστε μὴ
ἐξ ὧν ἀνθρώπου
μαρτυ-
ρεῖται, τὰ τῶν
μὲν σιω-
πῶντων Ἀθη-
ναίων. Diog.

Laert. in Xenocr.

Πάν τὸ ῥηθὲν
ὑπ' αὐτῶν
ἐμμένον
ὅρκου, τὸ δ'
ἐμμένειν αὐτοῖς
πιστῆσαι.
Joseph.

A good man (as Socrates did say) should apparently so demean himself, that his word may be deemed more credible than an Oath; the constant tenour of his practice vouching for it, and giving it such weight, that no asseveration can farther corroborate it.

He should τοῖς ἔργοις εὐοχεῖν, swear by his good deeds, and exhibit εἶναι ἀξιόπιστον, a life deserving belief, (as Clemens Alex. saith:) so that no man should desire more from him than his bare asseveration; but willingly should yield him the privilege which the Athenians granted to Xenocrates, that he should testify without Swearing.

He should be like the Essenes, of whom Josephus saith, that every thing spoken by them was more valid than an Oath; whence they declined Swearing.

He should so much confide in his own veracity and fidelity, and so much stand upon them, that he should not deign to offer any pledge for them, imply-

implying them to want confirmation.

He should (as S. Hierome saith) *so* Tantus in te sit veri amor, ut quicquid dixeris, juratum putes. love truth, that he should suppose himself to have sworn whatsoever he hath said; and therefore should not be apt to heap another Oath on his words. Hier. Ep. 14.

Upon such accounts common reason directed even Pagan wise-men wholly to interdict Swearing in ordinary conversation, or about petty matters, as an irrational and immoral practice, unworthy of sober and discreet persons.

Forbear Swearing about any matter, (said Plato, cited by Clem. Alex.) Avoid Swearing, if you can, wholly, (said Epictetus.) For many swear by no God, though you swear truly, said Isocrates. "Ορκος πρὸς πάντας ἀπέστω. Plato apud Clem. Alex. Str. 5. p. 433.

And divers the like precepts occur in other Heathens; the mention whereof may well serve to strike shame into many loose and vain people, bearing the name of Christians. "Ορκον παρὰ αἰτήσεων, εἰ μὴ εἶδόν τι, εἰς ἀπαι. E. p. 44. Ench. cap. 44. "Ενεκα χρημάτων μὴ δύναιτο δύναιτο."

σας, μὴ δ' εὐνοκῶν μέλλης. Isocr. ad Demon.

Indeed, for a true and real Christian, this practice doth especially in a far higher degree misbecome him, upon considerations peculiar to his high calling and holy profession.

Διὰ τὸ ἵε-
ρει τῶ Δ.δ;
ἐκ ἑξῆς ὁ-
μῶσαι; ἢ ὅτι
τοῖς μικροῦν
ἀπ. σ. αὐτῶν
τὰ θεῖα ἐ-
μύστα περὶ
συμβολῶν ἐκ
ἐκός ὄντων;
Plut. in Qu.
Rom. p. 491.

Plutarch telleth us, that among the Romans the *Flamen* of *Jupiter* was not permitted to swear: of which Law among other reasons he assigneth this; *Because it is not handsome, that he to whom divine and greatest things are intrusted, should be distrusted about small matters.* The which reason may well be applied to excuse every Christian from it, who is a Priest to the most High God, and hath the most celestial and important matters concredited to him; in comparison to which all other matters are very mean and inconsiderable. The dignity of his rank should render his word *verbum honoris*, passable without any farther engagement. He hath opinions of things, he hath undertaken practices inconsistent with Swearing. For he that firmly doth believe that God is ever present with him, an auditour and witness of all his discourse; he that is persuaded that a severe judgement shall pass on him, wherein he must *give an account* for every idle word which slippeth from him, and wherein, among other offenders, assuredly *Liars* will be condemned to the burning lake; he that in a great Sacrament (once most solemnly taken, and

Matt. 12. 35.

Revel. 21. 8.
& 22. 15.

and frequently renewed) hath engaged and sworn, together with all other Divine Commandments, to observe those which most expressely do charge him to be exactly just, faithfull, and veracious in all his words and deeds; who therefore should be ready to say with *David*, *I have sworn, and am stedfastly purposed, to keep thy righteous judgements*; to him * every word hath the force of an Oath; every Lie, every breach of promise, every violation of faith doth involve Perjury: for him to swear, is false heraldry, an impertinent accumulation of one Oath upon another: he of all men should disdain to allow that his words are not perfectly credible, that his promise is not secure, without being assured by an Oath.

Col. 3. 9.

Eph. 4. 25.

1 Pet. 2. 1.

Psal. 119. 106.

* *Omnis sermo fidelis pro jurejurando est.* Hier. in Matt. 5.

IX. Indeed the practice of Swearing greatly disparageth him that useth it, and derogateth from his credit upon divers accounts.

It signifieth, (if it signifieth any thing,) that he doth not confide in his own reputation, and judgeth his own bare word not to deserve credit: for why, if he taketh his word to be good, doth he back it with asseverations? why, if he deemeth his own honesty to bear

1 3

proof,

proof, doth he cite Heaven to warrant it?

Αἰχρὸν παν-
τελὸς ἢ ἀνέ-
ηπν, εαυτὸν
κατηχερεῖν ὡς
ἀναξίς πίσε-
ω· ἢ τὴν ᾧ
ἐγκων ἀσφάλειαν ἐμπέρεσθαι. Bas. in Ps. 14.

It is (saith S. Basil) a very foul and silly thing, for a man to accuse himself as unworthy of belief, and to profer an Oath for security.

By so doing a man doth authorize others to distrust him: for it can be no wrong to distrust him, who doth not pretend to be a credible person, or that his saying alone may safely be taken; who, by suspecting that others are not satisfied with his simple assertion, implieth a reason known to himself for it.

Ἦδη γὰρ ὁ ἄ-
μυνὲς εἰς ἀ-
πιστίαν ὑπε-
ρβαίνει. Phi-
lo.

It rendreth whatever he saith to be in reason suspicious, as discovering him void of conscience and discretion: for he that flatly against the rules of duty and reason will swear vainly, what can engage him to speak truly? he that is so loose in so clear and so considerable a point of obedience to God, how can he be supposed staunch in regard to any

Τῶν αὐτῶν ὅτιν ἀνθρώ-
πων τὰ πυνεθὲς πράττειν,
ἢ μὴ σεβντίζεν ἐπισκοκύν-
τας. Arist. Rhet. ad A-
lex. c. 18.

other? *It being (as Aristotle hath it) the part of the same men to doe ill things, and not to regard forswearing.* It will

at

at least constrain any man to suspect all his discourse of vanity and unadvisedness, seeing he plainly hath no care to bridle his tongue from so grosse an offence.

It is strange therefore, that any man of honour or honesty should not scorn, by such a practice, to shake his own credit, or to detract from the validity of his word; which should stand firm on it self, and not want any attestation to support it. It is a privilege of honourable persons, that they are excused from Swearing, and that their *verbum honoris* passeth in lieu of an Oath: is it not then strange, that when others dispense with them, they should not dispense with themselves; but voluntarily degrade themselves, and with sin forfeit so noble a privilege?

X. To excuse these faults, the Swearer will be forced to confesse, that his Oaths are no more then wast and insignificant words; deprecating being taken for serious, or to be understood that he meaneth any thing by them; but onely that he useth them as expletive phrases, *περὶ ἀναπλήρωσιν λόγου*, to plump his speech, and fill up sentences. But such pleas do no more then sug-

Hierocl.
Philo.

gest other faults of Swearing, and good arguments against it ; its impertinence, its abuse of speech, its disgracing the practiser of it in point of judgement and capacity. For so it is, Oaths as they commonly pass are meer excrefcencies of Speech, which do nothing but encumber and deform it ; they so embellish discourse, as a Wen or a Scab do beautifie a face, as a Patch or a Spot do adorn a garment.

To what purpose, I pray, is God's Name hooked and haled into our idle talk ? why should we so often mention him, when we do not mean any thing about him ? would it not, into every sentence to foist a dog or a horse, (to intrude *Turkish*, or any barbarous gibberish,) be altogether as proper and pertinent ?

What do these superfluities signifie, but that the venter of them doth little skill the use of speech, or the rule of conversation, but meaneth to sputter and prate any thing without judgement or wit ; that his invention is very barren, his fancy beggarly, craving the aid of any stuff to relieve it ? One would think a man of sense should grutch to lend his ear, or incline his attention to
such

such motley ragged discourse; that without nauseating he scarce should endure to observe men lavishing time, and squandering their breath so frivolously. 'Tis an affront to good company, to pester it with such talk.

XI. But farther, upon higher accounts this is a very uncivil and unmannerly practice.

Some vain persons take it for a gentle and gracefull thing, a special accomplishment, a mark of fine breeding, a point of high gallantry: for who, forsooth, is the brave Spark, the compleat Gentleman, the man of conversation and address, but he that hath the skill and confidence (O heavens! how mean a skill! how mad a confidence!) to lard every sentence with an Oath or a Curse; making bold at every turn to salute his Maker, or to summon him in attestation of his tattle; not to say, calling and challenging the Almighty to damn and destroy him? Such a conceit, I say, too many have of Swearing, because a custome thereof, together with divers other fond and base qualities, hath prevailed among some people, bearing the name and garb of Gentlemen.

But

But in truth there is no practice more crossing the genuine nature of Gentleness, or misbecoming persons well born and well bred; who should excell the rude vulgar in goodness, in courtesie, in nobleness of heart, in unwillingness to offend, and readiness to oblige those with whom they converse, in steddily composedness of mind and manners, in disdaining to say or doe any unworthy, any unhandsome things.

For this practice is not onely a grosse rudeness toward the main body of men, who justly reverence the Name of God, and detest such an abuse thereof; not onely (farther) an insolent defiance of the common Profession, the Religion, the Law of our Country, which disalloweth and condemneth it; but it is very odious and offensive to any particular Society or company, at least wherein there is any sober person, any who retaineth a sense of goodness, or is anywise concerned for God's honour: for to any such person no language can be more disgustfull; nothing can more grate his ears, or fret his heart, then to hear the sovereign object of his love and esteem so mocked and slighted; to see the
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the Law of his Prince so disloyally infringed, so contemptuously trampled on; to find his best Friend and Benefactor so outrageously abused. To give him the lie were a complement, to spit in his face were an obligation, in comparison to this usage.

Wherefore 'tis a wonder, that any person of rank, any that hath in him a spark of ingenuity, or doth at all pretend to good manners, should find in his heart or deign to comply with so scurvy a fashion; a fashion much more befitting the scumme of the people, then the flower of the Gentry; yea rather much below any man endued with a scrap of reason, or a grain of goodnesse. Would we bethink our selves, modest, sober and pertinent discourse would appear far more generous and masculine, then such mad Hectoring the Almighty, such boisterous insulting over the received Laws and general notions of mankind, such ruffianly swaggering against sobriety and goodnesse. If Gentlemen would regard the Vertues of their Ancestours, the founders of their quality; that gallant courage, that solid wisdom, that noble courtesy, which advanced their families, and severed them from
the

the vulgar ; this degenerate wanton-
ness and fordidness of language would
return to the dunghill, or rather (which
God grant) be quite banished from the
world ; the vulgar following their ex-
ample.

XII. Farther, the words of our Lord,
when he forbad this practice, do sug-
gest another consideration against it,
deducible from the causes and sources of
it ; from whence it cometh, that men
are so inclined or addicted thereto :

Matth. 5. 37. *Let (saith he) your communication be
Yea, yea, Nay, nay ; for whatsoever is
more then these cometh of evil.* The roots
of it he assureth us are evil, and there-
fore the fruit cannot be good : it is no
grape which groweth from thorns, or
fig from thistles. Consult experience,
and observe whence it doth proceed.

Sometimes it ariseth from exorbitant
heats of spirit, or transports of unbri-
dled passion. When a man is keenly
peevish, or fiercely angry, or eagerly
contentious, then he blustereth, and
dischargeth his choler in most tragical
strains ; then he would fright the ob-
jects of his displeasure by the most vio-
lent expressions thereof. This is some-
time alleged in excuse of rash Swearing ;

(I was

(*I was provoked*, the Swearer will say, *I was in passion* :) but it is strange, that a bad cause should justify a bad effect ; that one crime should warrant another ; that what would spoil a good action, should excuse a bad one.

Sometimes it proceedeth from arrogant conceit, and a tyrannical humour ; when a man fondly admireth his own opinion, and affecting to impose it on others, is thence moved to thwack it on with lusty Asseverations.

Sometimes it issueth from wantonness and levity of mind, disposing a man to sport with any thing, how serious, how grave, how sacred and venerable soever. *Isa. 28. 14.*
2 Cor. 1. 17.

Sometimes its rise is from stupid inadvertency, or heady precipitancy ; when the man doth not heed what he saith, or consider the nature and consequence of his words, but snatcheth any expression which cometh next, or which his roving fancy doth offer ; for want of that caution of the Psalmist, *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue : I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* *Psal. 39. 1.*
& 141. 3.

Some-

Sometimes (alas ! how often in this miserable Age ?) it doth spring from profane boldnesse ; when men design to put affronts on Religion, and to display their scorn and spight against Conscience ; affecting the reputation of stout Blades, of gallant Hectors, of resolute Giants, who dare doe any thing, who are not afraid to defy Heaven, and brave God Almighty himself.

(Psalm. 26.4.) Sometimes it is derived from apostish imitation, or a humour to comply with a fashion current among vain and dissolute persons.

It always doth come from a great defect of Conscience, of reverence to God, of love to goodnesse, of discretion and sober regard to the welfare of a man's Soul.

From such evidently-vicious and unworthy sources it proceedeth, and therefore must needs be very culpable. No good, no wise man can like actions drawn from such principles. Farther,

Matth. 7.16.

XIII. This offence may be particularly aggravated by considering, that it hath no strong temptation alluring to it ; that it yieldeth no sensible advantage ; that it most easily may be avoided or corrected.

Every

Every sin (saith S. Crystostome) hath not the same punishment ; but those things which may easily be reformed do bring on us greater punishment : and what can be more easy , then to reform this fault ? Tell me, (saith he) what difficulty, what sweat, what art, what hazard, what more doth it require beside a little care to abstain wholly from it ? It is but willing, or resolving on it, and it is instantly done : for there is not any natural inclination disposing to it , any strong appetite to detain us under its power.

It gratifieth no sense , it yieldeth no profit, it procureth no honour ; for the sound of it is not very melodious, and no man surely did ever get an estate by it, or was preferred to dignity for it. It rather to any good ear maketh a horrid and jarring noise ; it rather with the best part of the world produceth displeasure , dammage , and disgrace. What therefore beside monstrous vanity , and unaccountable perverseness , should hold men so devoted thereto ?

Surely of all dealers in sin the Swearer is palpably the silliest, and maketh the worst bargains for himself ; for he sinneth gratis, and (like those in the

Pro-

οὐ γὰρ διὰ πάντων
ἁμαρτημάτων
τὴν αὐτὴν τιμωρίαν
φέρει κόλασιν· ἀλλὰ τὰ
εὐκαταρτήματα
μεῖζονα ἡμῖν
ἐπαίγει τὴν
πινωσίαν.
Chry. Ἀνδρ.
i. p. 531.
Εἰ τί μοι, πικρὰν
δυσκολίαν, &c. Chryl.
Ἀνδρ. i. 3.
p. 594.
Chryl. Ἀνδρ.
ε'. p. 499.
Ἀνδρ. δ'.
p. 489.

Iſa. 52. 3.

Οὐτὸ δὲ,
 ἡδονὰς ἀ-
 γάγης αὐτῶν
 βιάζονται,
 καὶ ἀνοίας
 μύτης εἰς τὸ
 βάεσθαι
 καὶ ταπεινῆσαι
 αἰμαρτίας.
 Chryſ. An-
 δρ. i. p. 531.
 Οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῖς
 πῦρα φέρου-
 σιν ἔχοντες
 φεβανδίζονται,
 ἀλλὰ καὶ αἰ-
 φερῶνται ἐν τῷ
 πυρὶ. Ibid.

Prophet) *ſelleth his ſoul for nothing*. An Epicure hath ſome reaſon to allege, an Extortioner is a man of wiſedom, and acteth prudently in compariſon to him; for they enjoy ſome pleaſure, or acquire ſome gain here, in lieu of their Salvation hereafter: but this fondling offendeth Heaven, and abandoneth Happineſſe, he knoweth not why or for what. He hath not ſo much as the common plea of humane infirmity to excuſe him; he can hardly ſay that he was tempted thereto by any bait.

A phantaſtick humour poſſeſſeth him of ſpurning at Piety and ſoberneſſe; he inconfiderately followeth a herd of wild fops; he affecteth to play the Ape. What more then this can he ſay for himſelf?

XIV. Finally, let us conſider, that as we our ſelves; with all our members and powers, were chiefly deſigned and framed to glorify our Maker; (the which to doe is indeed the greateſt perfection and nobleſt privilege of our nature;) ſo our Tongue and ſpeaking faculty were given to us to declare our admiration and reverence of him; to exhibit our due love and gratitude toward him, to profeſſe our truſt and confidence

fidence in him, to celebrate his praises; to avow his benefits, to address our supplications to him, to maintain all kinds of devotional intercourse with him, to propagate our knowledge, fear, love and obedience to him, in all such ways to promote his honour and service. This is the most proper, worthy and due use of our Tongue, for which it was created, to which it is dedicated, from whence it becometh, as it is so often styled, our *glory*, and the best member that we have; that whereby we excell all creatures here below, and whereby we are no lesse discriminated from them, then by our Reason; that whereby we consort with the Blessed Angels above in the distinct utterance of praise, and communication of glory to our Creator. Wherefore applying this to any impious discourse, with this to profane God's Blessed Name, with this to violate his Holy Commands, with this to unhallow his Sacred Ordinance, with this to offer dishonour and indignity to him, is a most unnatural abuse, an horrid ingratitude toward him.

It is that indeed whereby we render this noble Organ incapable of any good use. For * how (as the excellent Father

Psal. 16. 9:

& 30. 12.

& 57. 8.

& 108. 1.

Hoc enim uno.

prestamus vel

maximè feris,

quòd colloqui-

mur inter nos,

et quòd ex-

primere di-

cendo sensa

possumus. Cic.

de Orat. 1.

* Πως ευε-

μισα---; Chr.

Avd p. 15.

p. 559.

Avd p. 12.

p. 538.

K

doth

doth often urge) can we pray to God for mercies, or praise God for his benefits, or heartily confesse our sins, or chearfully partake of the Holy mysteries, with a mouth defiled by impious Oaths, with a heart guilty of so hainous disobedience?

Likewise, whereas a secondary, very worthy use of our Speech is, to promote the good of our Neighbour, and especially to edifie him in Piety, according to that wholesome precept of the Apostle, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*; the practice of Swearing is an abuse very contrary to that good purpose, serving to corrupt our Neighbour, and to instill into him a contempt of Religion; or however grievously to scandalize him.

XV. I shall adde but two words more. One is, that we would seriously consider, that our Blessed Saviour, who loved us so dearly, who did and suffered so much for us, who redeemed us by his blood, who said unto us, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*, he thus positively hath injoynd, *But I say unto you, Swear not at all*: and how then

Eph. 4. 29.

Joh 14. 15.

Matt. 5. 34.

then can we find in our heart directly to thwart his word?

The other is, that we would lay to heart the reason whereby S. James doth enforce the point, and the sting in the close of our Text, wherewith I conclude; *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your Yea be yea, and your Nay nay, lest you fall into condemnation, or, * lest you fall under damnation.* * * μη ὅτι
καίτοι πιστεύετε
From the which infinite mischief, and from all sin that may cause it, God in mercy deliver us through our Blessed Redeemer Jesus, to whom for ever be all glory and praise.

K 2

The



The Fourth Sermon.

TITUS 3. 2.

—*To speak evil of no man.*

THese words do imply a double Duty; one incumbent on Teachers, another on the People who are to be instructed by them.

The Teachers Duty appeareth from reflecting on the words of the Context, which govern these, and make them up an entire sentence; * *Put them in mind*, or, Rub up their memory to doe thus. It is *S. Paul's* injunction to *Titus*, a Bishop and Pastour of the Church, that he should admonish the people committed to his care and instruction, as of other great Duties, (of yielding obedience to Magistrates, of behaving themselves peaceably, of practising meeknesse and equity toward all men, of being readily disposed to every good

* ὁποῖον
οὐκ αὐτοῖς.

K 3

work.)

work,) so particularly of this, *μὴ ἐν βλασφημίᾳ, to revile, or speak evil of, no man.*

Whence it is apparent, that this is one of the principal Duties that Preachers are obliged to mind people of, and to presse upon them. And if this were needfull then, when Charity, kindled by such instructions and examples, was so lively; when Christians, by their Sufferings, were so inured to meeknesse and patience; when every one, for the honour of his Religion, and the safety of his person, was concerned in all respects to demean himself innocently and inoffensively; then is it now especially requisite, when (such engagements and restraints being taken off, Love being cooled, Persecution being extinct, the tongue being set loose from all extraordinary curbs) the transgression of this Duty is grown so prevalent and rife, that evil-speaking is almost as common as speaking, ordinary conversation extremely abounding therewith, that Ministers should discharge their office in dehorting and dissuading from it.

Well indeed it were, if by their example of using mild and moderate discourse,

course, of abstaining from virulent invectives, tauntings and scoffings, good for little but to enflame anger, and infuse ill-will, they would lead men to good practice of this sort: for no examples can be so wholesome, or so mischievous to this purpose, as those which come down from the Pulpit, the place of edification, backed with special authority and advantage.

However, it is to Preachers a ground of assurance, and matter of satisfaction, that in pressing this Duty they shall perform their duty: their Text being not so much of their own chusing, as given them by *S. Paul*; they can surely scarce find a better to discourse upon: it cannot be a matter of small moment or use, which this great Master and Guide so expressly directeth us to insist upon. And to the observance of his Precept, so far as concerneth me, I shall immediately apply my self.

It is then the Duty of all Christian people, (to be taught, and pressed on them,) *not to reproach, or speak evil of any man.* The which Duty, for your instruction, I shall first endeavour somewhat to explain, declaring its import and extent; then, for your farther edi-

fication, I shall inculcate it, proposing several inducements persuasive to the observance of it.

I. For Explication, we may first consider the object of it, *no man* ; then the Act it self, which is prohibited, *to blaspheme*, that is, to reproach, to revile, or (as we have it rendered) *to speak evil*.

NO MAN. S. Paul questionlesse did especially mean hereby to hinder the Christians at that time from reproaching the *Jews* and the Pagans among whom they lived, men in their lives very wicked and corrupt, men in opinion extremely dissenting from them, men who greatly did hate, and cruelly did persecute them ; of whom therefore they had mighty provocations and temptations to speak ill ; their judgement of the persons, and their resentment of injuries, making it difficult to abstain from doing so. Whence by manifest analogy may be inferred, that the Object of this Duty is very large, indeed universal and unlimited: that we must forbear reproach not onely against pious and vertuous persons, against persons of our own judgment or party,

party, against those who never did harm or offend us, against our relations, our friends, our benefactors; in respect to whom there is no ground or temptation of ill-speaking; but even against the most unworthy and wicked persons, against those who most dis-coast in opinion and practice from us, against those who never did oblige us, yea those who have most disoblighd us, even against our most bitter and spitefull enemies. There is no exception or excuse to be admitted from the quality, state, relation, or demeanour of men; the Duty (according to the proper sense, or due qualifications and limits of the act) doth extend to all men: for,
Speak evil of no man.

As for the Act, it may be inquired what the word *βλασφημεῖν*, to **BLASPHEME**, doth import. I answer, that it is to vent words concerning any person which do signify in us ill opinion, or contempt, anger, hatred, enmity conceived in our minds toward him; which are apt in him to kindle wrath, and breed ill blood toward us; which tend to beget in others that hear ill conceit, or ill-will toward him; which are much destructive of his reputation, prejudicial
to

to his interests, productive of damage or mischief to him. It is otherwise in Scripture termed *λοιδορεῖν*, to rail or revile, (to use bitter and ignominious language;) *ὕβριζεν*, to speak contumeliously; *φέρεω βλασφημίων κελόν*, to bring railing accusation, (or reproachfull censure;) *καταλαλεῖν*, to use obloquy, or obtrusion; *καταραδᾶν*, to curse, that is, to speak words importing that we do wish ill to a person.

Luk. 11. 45.

2 Pet. 2. 11.

Jud. 9.

Jam. 4. 11.

Rom. 12. 14.

Luk. 6. 28.

(2 Sam. 16. 10.)

Such is the language we are prohibited to use. To which purpose we may observe, that whereas in our conversation and commerce with men, there do frequently occur occasions to speak of men and to men words apparently disadvantageous to them, expressing our dissent in opinion from them, or a dislike in us of their proceedings, we may doe this in different ways and terms; some of them gentle and moderate, signifying no ill mind or disaffection toward them; others harsh and sharp, arguing height of disdain, disgust, or despite, whereby we bid them defiance, and shew that we mean to exasperate them. Thus, telling a man that we differ in judgment from him, or conceive him not to be in the right, and calling

calling him a Liar, a Deceiver, a Fool; saying that he doeth amisse, taketh a wrong course, transgresseth the rule, and calling him dishonest, unjust, wicked; (to omit more odious and provoking names, unbecoming this place, and not deserving our notice;) are several ways of expressing the same things: whereof the latter, in relating passages concerning our Neighbour, or in debating cases with him, is prohibited: for thus the words *reproaching*, (A&. 23. 3, *reviling, railing, cursing, and the like*, 4. 5.) do signify; and thus our Lord himself doth explain them, in his Divine Sermon, wherein he doth enact this Law; *Whosoever* (saith he) *shall say to his brother, R A C A*, (that is, Vain man, or Liar,) *shall be in danger of the councill: but whosoever shall say, THOU FOOL, shall be in danger of Hell-fire*; that is, he rendreth himself liable to a strict account, and to severe condemnation before God, who useth contemptuous and contumelious expressions toward his Neighbour, in proportion to the malignity of such expressions.

The reason of things also doth help to explain those words, and to shew why they are prohibited: because those
harsh

harsh terms are needlesse ; mild words serving as well to expresse the same things : because they are commonly unjust, loading men with greater defect or blame then they can be proved to deserve, or their actions do import : (for every man that speaketh falshood is not therefore a Liar, every man that erreth is not thence a Fool, every man that doeth amisse is not consequently Dishonest or wicked ; the secret intentions and the habitual dispositions of men not being always to be collected from their outward actions :) because they are uncharitable , signifying that we entertain the worst opinions of men, and make the worst construction of their doings , and are disposed to shew them no favour or kindnesse : because also they produce mischievous effects, such as spring from the worst passions raised by them.

This in gross is the meaning of the Precept. But since there are some other Precepts seeming to clash with this ; since there are cases wherein we are allowed to use the harsher sort of terms, there are great examples in appearance thwarting this rule ; therefore it may be requisite for determining the limits

limits of our duty, and distinguishing it from transgression, that such exceptions or restrictions should be somewhat declared.

I. First then, we may observe, that it may be allowable to persons anywise concerned in the prosecution or administration of Justice, to speak words which in private intercourse would be reproachfull. A Witnesse may impeach of crimes hurtfull to justice, or publick tranquillity ; a Judge may challenge, may rebuke, may condemn an offender in proper terms, (or forms of speech prescribed by Law,) although most disgracefull and distastfull to the guilty : for it belongeth to the majesty of publick Justice to be bold, blunt, severe ; little regarding the concerns or passions of particular persons, in comparison to the publick welfare.

A Testimony therefore or Sentence against a criminal, which materially is a reproach, and morally would be such in a private mouth, is not yet formally so according to the intent of this rule. For practices of this kind, which serve the exigencies of Justice, are not to be interpreted as proceeding from anger, hatred, revenge, any bad passion or
humour ;

humour ; but in way of needfull discipline for God's service, and common benefit of men. It is not indeed so much the Minister of justice, as God himself, our absolute Lord, as the Sovereign, God's representative, actiſg in the publick behalf, as the Commonwealth it self, who by his mouth do rebuke the obnoxious person.

2. God's Ministers in Religious affairs, to whom the care of mens instruction and edification is committed, are enabled to inveigh against sin and vice, who-ever consequentially may be touched thereby : yea sometimes it is their duty, with severity and sharpnesse to reprove particular persons, not onely privately, but publickly, in order to their correction, and edification of others.

Thus Saint *Paul* directeth *Timothy* ;
 1 Tim. 5. 20. *Them that sin* (notoriously and scandalously, he meaneth) *rebuke before all,*
 2 Tim. 4. 2. *that others may fear :* that is in a manner apt to make impressiſon on the minds of the hearers, so as to scare them from like offences. And to *Titus* he writes,
 Tit. 1. 13. *Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.* And, *Cry aloud,*
 Isa. 58. 1. *spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,*
 and

and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins, saith the Lord to the Prophet. Such are the charges and commissions laid on and granted to his Messengers.

Thus may we observe that God's Prophets of old, S. John the Baptist, our Lord himself, the Holy Apostles did in terms most vehement and biting reprove the Age in which they lived, and some particular persons in them. The Prophets are full of declamations and invectives against the general corruption of their Times, and against the particular manners of some persons in them. *Ah sinfull nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters! They are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men; and they bend their tongues like their bow for lies. Thy Princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherlesse, neither doth the cause of the widom come before them. The Prophets prapbesy falsly, and the Priests rule by their means. As troupes of robbers wait for a man, so the company of Priests murther in the way by consent, and commit lewdnesse.*

Such

Vid. Hier. 1. 9. Pelag. 1. 9.

Isa. 1. 4.

Jer. 9. 2, 3.

** Isa. 1. 23.*

Hof. 9. 15.

Ezek. 22. 6, 27.

** Jer. 5. 31.*

& 14. 14.

** Hof. 6. 9.*

Ezek. 22. 26.

Mic. 3. 11.

Zeph. 3. 4.

Such is their style commonly. S. John the Baptist calleth the Scribes and Pharisees ^d *a generation of vipers*. Our Saviour speaketh of them in the same terms; calleth them an ^e *evil and adulterous generation, Serpents, and children of vipers*; ^g *Hypocrites, painted sepulchres, obscure graves, (μνημεία ἄδνηλα,) blind Guides, Fools and blind, children of the Devil*. S. Paul likewise calleth the Schismatical and heretical Teachers, ^h *Dogs, false Apostles, evil and deceitfull workers, men of corrupt minds, Reprobates, and abominable*. With the like colours do S. Peter, S. Jude, and other the Apostles paint them. Which sort of speeches are to be supposed to proceed, not from private passion or design, but out of holy zeal for God's honour, and from earnest charity toward men, for to work their amendment, and common edification. They were uttered also by special wisdom, and peculiar order; from God's authority; and in his name: so that as God by them is said to preach, to entreat, to warn, and to exhort, so by them also he may be said to reprehend, and reprove.

3. Even

^d Matt. 3. 7.^e Matt. 16. 4.^g 12. 34, 39.^g Matt. 23.

13, &c.

Matt. 15. 7.

14. 8. 16. 3.

22. 18.

Luk. 12. 1.

Luk. 11. 44.

Matt. 23.

24. 17.

Joh. 8. 44.

^h Phil. 3. 2.

2 Cor. 11. 13.

1 Tim. 6. 5.

2 Tim. 3. 8.

Tit. 1. 16.

² Cor. 5. 20.

Col. 1. 28.

3. Even private persons in due season, with discretion and temper, may reprove others, whom they observe to commit sin, or follow bad courses, out of charitable design, and with hope to reclaim them. This was an office of charity imposed anciently even upon the *Jews*; much more doth it lie upon Christians, who are obliged more earnestly to tender the spiritual good of those who by the stricter and more holy bands of brotherhood are allied to them. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother*; Levit. 19. 17. *thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him*, was a precept of the old Law: and, *ὁ ἀδελφὸς ἀτακτος*, to admonish the disorderly, is an Evangelical rule. Such persons we are enjoined to shun and decline: but first we must endeavour by sober advice and admonition to reclaim them; we must not thus reject them till they appear contumacious and incorrigible, refusing to hear us, or becoming deaf to reproof. This although it necessarily doth include setting out their faults, and charging blame on them, (answerable to their offences,) is not the culpable reproach here meant, it being needfull toward a wholesome effect, and

1 Thess. 5. 14.

1 Tim. 6. 5.

Rom. 16. 17.

Tit. 3. 10.

2 Thess. 3. 6.

Matt. 18. 17.

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pro-

proceeding from charitable intention.

4. Some vehemency (some smartness and sharpness) of speech may sometimes be used in defence of Truth, and impugning Errours of bad consequence; especially when it concerneth the interest of Truth, that the reputation and authority of its adversaries should somewhat be abased, or abated. If by a partial opinion or reverence toward them, however begotten in the minds of men, they strive to overbear or discountenance a good cause, their faults (so far as truth permitteth, and need requireth) may be detected and displayed. For this cause particularly may we presume our Lord (otherwise so meek in his temper, and mild in his carriage toward all men) did characterize the *Jewish* Scribes in such terms, that their authority (being then so prevalent with the people) might not prejudice the Truth, and hinder the efficacy of his Doctrine. This is part of that *ἐνταύτῃ τῇ κρίσει*, that duty of *contending earnestly for the faith*, which is incumbent on us.

Jud. 3.

5. It may be excusable upon particular emergent occasions, with some heat of language to expresse dislike of
noto-

notorious wickedness. As our Lord doth against the perverse incredulity Matt. 17. 17. and stupidity in the Pharisees, their profane misconstruction of his words and actions, their malicious opposing truth, and obstructing his endeavours in God's service. As S. Peter did to *Simon Magnus*, telling him, that he *was* Act. 8. 23. *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* As S. Paul to *Elymas* the Sorcerer, when he *withstood him, and* Act. 13. 8, 10. *desired to turn away the Deputy, Sergius, from the faith ; O* (said he, stir'd with a holy zeal and indignation) *thou full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ?* The same spirit which inabled him to inflict a sore punishment on that wicked wretch, did prompt him to use that sharp language toward him ; unquestionably deserved, and seasonably pronounced. As also, when the High Priest commanded him illegally and unjustly to be misused, that speech from a mind justly sensible of such outrage broke forth, *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.* Act. 23. 3. So, when Saint Peter presumptuously would have dissuaded our Lord from

Matt. 16.23.

compliance with God's will, in undergoing those crosses which were appointed to him by God's decree, our Lord calleth him *Satan*; — Ὁ ὁυρε, Σατανᾶ, *Avant, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that are of men.*

These sort of speeches, issuing from just and honest indignation, are sometimes excusable, oftentimes commendable; especially when they come from persons eminent in authority, of notable integrity, endued with special measures of Divine grace, of wisdom, of goodnesse; such as cannot be suspected of intemperate anger, of ill nature, of ill will, of ill design.

In such cases as are above mentioned, a sort of *Evill-speaking* about our Neighbour may be allowable or excusable. But for fear of over-doing, great caution and temper is to be used; and we should never apply any such limitations as cloaks to palliate unjust or uncharitable dealing. Generally it is more advisable, to suppress such eruptions of passion, then to vent it; for seldom passion hath not inordinate motions joyned with it, or tendeth to good ends. And however it will doe well to reflect
on

on those cases; and to remark some particulars about them.

First, We may observe; that in all these cases all possible moderation, equity and candour are to be used; so that no Ill-speaking be practised beyond what is needfull, or convenient. Even in prosecution of offences, the bounds of truth, of equity, of humanity and clemency are not to be transgressed: A Judge must not lay on the most criminal person more blame, or contumely, then the case will bear, or then serveth the designs of justice. However our Neighbour doth incur the calamities of sin and of punishment, we must not be insolent, or contemptuous toward him. So we may learn by that Law of Moses, back'd with a notable reason: *And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the Judge cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed; lest if he should exceed, and beat him above those stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.* Whence appears, that we should be carefull of not vilifying an offender beyond measure. And how

Deut. 25. 2, 3.

Jos. 7. 19,
25.

mildly Governours should proceed in the administration of justice, the example of *Joshua* may teach us, who thus examineth *Achan*, the cause of so great mischief to the publick ; *My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him ; and tell me now what thou hast done, hide it not from me. My son ; what compellation could be more benign and kind ? I pray thee ; what language could be more courteous and gentle ? give glory to God, and make confession ; what words could be more inoffensively pertinent ? And when he sentenced that great Malefactor, the cause of so much mischief, this was all he said, Why hast thou troubled us ? The Lord will trouble thee ; words void of contumely or insulting, containing onely a close intimation of the cause, and a simple declaration of the event he was to undergo.*

Secondly, Likewise Ministers, in the taxing sin and sinners, are to proceed with great discretion and caution, with much gentleness and meekness ; signifying a tender pity of their infirmities, charitable desires of their good, the best opinion of them, and the best hopes

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hopes for them, that may consist with any reason; according to those Apostolical rules: *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meeknesse; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted: and, We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please our selves: and more expressely, A servant of the Lord must not fight, but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, patient, In meeknesse instructing those that oppose themselves.* Thus did S. Peter temper his reproof of Simon Magus with this wholesome and comfortable advice; *Repent therefore from this thy wickednesse, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*

Gal. 6. 1.

Rom. 15. 1.

2 Tim. 2.
24, 25.

A. 8. 22.

Thirdly, As for fraternal correption, and reproof of faults, (when it is just and expedient to use it,) ordinarily the * calmest and mildest way is the most proper, and most likely to obtain good successe: it commonly doth || in a more kindly manner convey the sense thereof into the heart, and therein more powerfully worketh remorse, then the fierce and harsh way. Clearly to shew a man his fault, with the reason proving

* *Reprehensio contumelia vasa debet. Neque monitio aspera sit, nec oburgatio contumeliosa.*
Ambrosi. de Offic. 3. 16.
|| *Prov. 17. 10. A reproof en- tireth more in- to a wise man, then a hun- dred stripes into a fool.*

it such, so that he becometh thoroughly convinced of it, is sufficient to breed in him regret, and to shame him before

his own mind : to doe more, (in way of aggravation, of insulting on him, of inveighing against him,) as it doth often not well consist with humanity, so it is seldome consonant to discretion, if we do, as we ought, seek his health and amendment. Hu-

manity requireth, that when we undertake to reform our Neighbour, we should take care not to deform him ; (not to discourage or displease him more then is necessary ;) when we would correct his manners, that we should also consider his modesty, and consult his reputation ; *curam agentes* (as Seneca speaketh) *non tantum salutis, sed & honestæ cicatricis*, having care not onely to heal the wound, but to leave a comely scar behind. Be (adviseth S. Austin) so displeased with iniquity, as to consider and consult humanity : for, Zeal void of humanity, is not (saith S. Chrysostome) zeal, but rather animosity ; and reproof not mixt with good will, appeareth a kind of malignity. We should

*Ο ὁδῶν, ὅταν λάβῃ π-
να πλανώμενον, ἤγαγαν ἐ-
πὶ ὁδὸν πάλιν δέυσαν· ὅχι
καταγελάσας ἢ λαιδερησα-
μένοι ἀπ᾿ αὐτοῦ. καὶ σὺ δὲ ζῶν
αὐτὸς πάλιν ἀλλήθειαν, καὶ
ὁ λόγος ὅτι ἀκολουθεῖ, &c.
Epiſt. 2. 12.

Sen. de Clem.

l. 7.

Vid. Chryſ.

in Matt. 9. 8.

Or. 29.

Ita succense
iniquitati, ut
consulere me-
mineris hu-
manitatis.

Aug.

Ζῆλος φιλα-
νθρωπίας κα-
ρὸς, ἢ ζῆλος,
&c.

should so rebuke those who, by frailty or folly incident to mankind, have fallen into misdemeanours, that they may perceive we do sincerely pity their ill case, and tender their good; that we mean not to upbraid their weakness, or insult upon their misfortune; that we delight not to inflict on them more grief then is plainly needfull and unavoidable; that we are conscious and sensible of our own obnoxiousness to the like slips or falls, and do consider, that we also may be tempted, Gal. 6. 1. and being tempted may be overborn.

This they cannot perceive, or be persuaded of, except we temper our speech with benignity and mildness.

Such speech || prudence also dictateth, as most usefull and hopefull for producing the good ends honest reprehension doth aim at; it mollifieth and it melteth a stubborn heart, it subdueth

and winneth a perverse will, it healeth distempered affections. Whereas roughly handling is apt to defeat or obstruct the cure; rubbing the soar doth tend to exasperate and inflame it. Harsh speech rendreth advice odious and unsavoury;

|| Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones. Prov. 16. 24.

A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger. Prov. 15. 1.

2 Thell. 3. 15.
 Μη ως ἐχ-
 θροὶ ἡγούμενοι,
 ἀλλὰ ὡς ἀ-
 γάπῃτες αὐ-
 τοὺς ἀγαπᾶτε

favoury ; driveth from it, and depriveth it of efficacy : it turneth regret for a fault into displeasure and disdain against the reprover : it looks not like the dealing of a kind friend, but like the persecution of a spitefull enemy : it seemeth rather an ebullition of gall, or a defluxion from rancour, then an expression of good will : the offender will take it for a needless and pitiless tormenting, or for a proud and tyrannical domineering over him. He that can bear a friendly touch, will not endure to be lashed with angry and reproachfull words. In fine, all reproof ought to be seasoned with discretion, with candour, with moderation and meekness.

Fourthly, Likewise in defence of truth, and maintenance of a good cause, we may observe, that commonly the fairest language is most proper and advantageous, and that reproachfull or foul terms are most improper and prejudicial. A calm and meek way of discoursing doth much advantage a good cause, as arguing the patron thereof to have confidence in the cause it self, and to rely upon its strength ; that he is in a temper fit to apprehend it

it himself, and to maintain it; that he propoundeth it as a friend, wishing the hearer for his own good to follow it, leaving him the liberty to judge, and chuse for himself. But rude speech, and contemptuous reflexions on persons, as they do signifie nothing to the question, so they commonly bring much disadvantage and dammage to the cause, creating mighty prejudices against it: they argue much impotency in the advocate, and consequently little strength in what he maintains; that he is little able to judge well, and altogether unapt to teach others: they intimate a diffidence in himself concerning his cause, and that, despairing to maintain it by reason, he seeks to uphold it by passion; that, not being able to convince by fair means, he would bear down by noise and clamour; that, not skilling to get his suit quietly, he would extort it by force, obtruding his conceits violently as an enemy, or imposing them arbitrarily as a Tyrant. Thus doth he really disparage and slur his cause, however good and defensible in it self.

A modest and friendly style doth state truth; it, like its authour, doth usually

Qui dum dicit, malus videtur, mihi male dicit.
Quint. 6. 2.
Nisi quid im- peritos etiam animosos atque iracundos esse manifestum est, dum per inopiam consilii et sermonis ad iracundiam facile vertuntur. Firmil. apud Cyp. Ep. 75.

usually reside (not in the rumbling
 1 King. 19. *wind*, nor in the shaking *earthquake*,
 11, 12. nor in the raging *fire*, but) in the *small*
 — & inhu- *still voice*: sounding in this, it is most
 manum est, & *audible*, most penetrant, and most ef-
 ipsi qui dicit *fectual*: thus propounded, it is willing-
 inutile; tum *ly hearkned to*; for men have no aver-
 cause contra- *sation* from hearing those who seem to
 rium, quia *love them*, and wish them well. It is
 plane & ad- *easily conceived*; no prejudice or pas-
 versarii sunt, *sion* clouding the apprehensive facul-
 & inimici: *ties*: it is readily embraced; no ani-
 & quantu- *mosity* withstanding or obstructing it.
 lumcunque *It is the sweetness of the lips*, which (as
 bis virum *the Wise-man telleth us) encreaseth*
 est, contume- *learning*; disposing a man to hear les-
 lia augetur. *sons of good doctrine*, rendring him
 Quint. 12. 9. *capable to understand them*, insinuating
 Prov. 16. 21. *and impressing them upon the mind*:
 Δὲ γὰρ τὸ μέλ- *the affections being thereby unlocked*,
 λοντά π ὅτι *the passage becomes open to the Rea-*
 χρυσίου *son*.
 μαθεῖν, πρὸ *son*.
 ὅτι ἄλλων *son*.
 πόντων ἡ δέ- *son*.
 ως ἔχον πρὸς *son*.
 τὸ διδάσκειν α. *son*.
 --- ἡ δὲ ως δέ *son*.
 ἔκ αὖν πρὸς *son*.
 πρὸς τὸ δρᾶ- *son*.
 σασθαι *son*.
 τὸ ὑπερβαίνειν. *son*.

Chryl. in 2 Tim. Or. 6.

But it is plainly a very preposterous
 method of instructing, of deciding
 controversies, of begetting peace, to
 vex and anger those concerned by ill
 language. Nothing surely doth more
 hinder the efficacy of discourse, and
 prevent

*Οἱ ἰσχυροὶ ἐκεί-
 νους ἀντὶ τῆ
 χρηστότητος
 τὴν ἀπολλύμε-
 νὴν ἀπραγμά-
 τειαν.
 Greg. Naz.
 Or. 26.

prevent conviction, then doth this course, upon many obvious accounts. It doth first put in a strong bar to attention: for no man willingly doth afford an ear to him, whom he conceiveth disaffected toward him; which opinion harsh words infallibly will produce: no man can expect to hear truth from him, whom he apprehendeth disordered in his own mind, whom he seeth rude in his proceedings, whom he taketh to be unjust in his dealing; as men certainly will take those to be, who presume to revile others for using their own judgment freely, and dissenting from them in opinion. Again, this course doth blind the hearer's mind, so that he cannot discern what he that pretends to instruct him doth mean, or how he doth assert his doctrine. Truth will not be discerned through the smoak of wrathfull expressions; right being defaced by foul language will not appear; passion being excited will not suffer a man to perceive the sense, or the force of an argument. The will also thereby is hardned, and hindred from submitting to truth. In such a case, *non persuadebis, etiamsi persuadearis*; although you stop his mouth, you cannot

Οὐ γὰρ ἀπαι-
δεύτως πα-
ιδεύομεν, ὡς
τοῖς ὕστερον
ἐαλλομένοις, ὅ-
τι περ πάραυτον
οἱ πολλοί, μὴ
τῷ λόγῳ μα-
χημένοι, τοῖς
δὲ λέγουσι, καὶ
τῷ ἀδελφείῳ
ἔστιν ὅτι οὐ
λογισμῶν
λατρεῖται
συγκάλυ-
πτοντες. Naz.
Or. 32.
Ὅταν τις
πῶς ἀνδρὸς
ἐχθρῶν, καὶ
ἐμὲ πᾶσι,
ὅτι περὶ αὐτοῦ
ὡς ἐμὲ ἡ-
δονῆς διχό-
μας τὰ λε-
γόμενα.
Chrys. Tom.
5. Or. 52.

cannot subdue his heart ; although he can no longer fight, yet he never will yield : animosity raised by such usage rendreth him invincibly obstinate in his conceits and courses. Briefly, from this proceeding men become unwilling to mark, unfit to apprehend, indisposed to embrace any good instruction or advice : it maketh them indocile and intractable, averse from better instruction, pertinacious in their opinions, and refractory in their ways.

PROV. 24. 26. *Every man (saith the Wise-man) shall kisse his lips that giveth a right answer : but no man surely will be ready to kisse those lips which are embittered with reproach, or defiled with dirty language.*

Βενήτ' ἢ
ἀρεστέων
αἰὲς τῶν
Ἑλλήνων.

It is said of Pericles, that *with thundering and lightning he put Greece into confusion* : such discourse may serve to confound

things, it seldome tendeth to compose them. If Reason will not pierce, Rage will scarce avail to drive it in. Satyrical virulency may vex men sorely, but it hardly ever soundly converts them. *Few become wiser or better by ill words.* Children may be frigh-

Chrys. in 2 Tim. 2. 24.
Ὁ δὲ σοφὸς δέος ἔχει τοῦ
ἐναντίου αὐτοῦ ἐπιεικείας χρηστῶν,
ὅπως ἴδῃ ὁ μάλιστα δευτεῖν
δυναμὸν. Ἦνεν δὲ Ἦν-
εν μὲν πρῶτος καὶ ἰσχυρὸς
μᾶλλον, ἢ μὲν δευτεῖν
ἐνδεής.

frighted into compliance by loud and severe increpations; but men are to be allured by rational persuasion back'd with courteous usage: they may be sweetly drawn, they cannot be violently driven to change their judgment and practice. Whence that advice of the Apostle, *With meeknesse instruct those that oppose themselves*, doth no lesse favour of wisdom, then of goodnesse.

2 Tim. 2. 25.

Fifthly, As for the examples of extraordinary persons, which in some cases do seem to authorize the practice of Evil-speaking, we may consider, that as they had especial commission enabling them to doe some things beyond ordinary standing rules, wherein they are not to be imitated; as they had especial illumination and direction, which preserved them from swerving in particular cases from truth and equity; so the tenour of their life did evidence, that it was the glory of God, the good of men, the necessity of the case, which moved them to it. And of them also we may observe, that in divers occasions, (yea generally, whenever onely their private credit or interest were concerned,) although grievously provoked, they did out of meeknesse, patience,

This case is like the other cases, wherein the practice of good and great men, although excusable, is not yet exemplary: as the heroical acts of David, of Sampson, of Ebul, of Phineas, of Elias, of Moses; David's Duel, Sampson's Suicide, Moses's slaying the Egyptian, Ebul's slaying the King of Moab, Elias's calling for fire, by extraordinary and peculiar instinct.

tience, and charity, wholly forbear reproachfull speech. Our Saviour, who sometimes upon special reason in his discourses used such harsh words, yet when he was most spitefully accused, reproached, and persecuted, *did not open his mouth*, or return one angry word : *Being reviled, he did not* (as S. Peter, proposing his example to us, telleth us) *revile again; suffering, he did not threaten.* He used the softest language to Judas, to the Souldiers, to Pilate and Herod, to the Priests, &c. And the Apostles, who sometimes inveigh so zealously against the opposers and perverters of truth, did in their private conversation and demeanour strictly observe their own rules of abstinence from reproach : *Being reviled we blesse,*
 1 Pct. 2. 23. *being persecuted we suffer it;* so doth S. Paul represent their practice. And in reason we should rather follow them in this their ordinary course, then in their extraordinary fallies of practice.

In fine, however in some cases and circumstances the matter may admit such exceptions, so that all language disgracefull to our Neighbour is not ever culpable; yet the cases are so few and rare in comparison, the practice commonly

monly is so dangerous and ticklish, that worthily forbearing to reproach doth bear the style of a general Rule : and particularly, (for clearer direction,) we are in the following cases obliged carefully to shun it ; or in speaking about our Neighbour we must observe these Cautions.

1. We should never in severe terms inveigh against any man without reasonable warrant, or presuming upon a good call and commission thereto. As every man should not assume to himself the power of administering justice, (of trying, sentencing, and punishing offenders,) so must not every man take upon him to speak against those who seem to doe ill ; which is a sort of punishment, including the infliction of smart and damage upon the persons concerned. Every man hath indeed a commission, in due place and season, with discretion and moderation to admonish his Neighbour offending ; but otherwise to speak ill of him, no private man hath just right or authority : and therefore in presuming to doe it, he is disorderly and irregular, trespassing beyond his bounds, usurping an undue power to himself.

M

2. We

2. We should never speak ill of any man without apparent just cause. It must be just: we must not reproach men for things innocent, or indifferent; for not concurring in disputable opinions with us, for not complying with our humour, for not serving our interest, for not doing any thing to which they are not obliged, or for using their liberty in any case: it must be at least some considerable fault, which we can so much as tax. It must also be clear and certain, notorious and palpable; for to speak ill upon slender conjectures, or doubtfull suspicions, is full of iniquity. Ὅσα ἐκ οἰδᾶσι, βλασφημῶσι, *They rail at things which they know not*, is part of those wicked mens character, whom S. Jude doth so severely reprehend. If indeed, these conditions being wanting, we presume to reproach any man, we do therein no lesse then slander him; which to doe is unlawfull in any case, is in truth a most diabolical and detestable crime. To impose odious names and characters on any person, which he deserveth not, or without ground of truth, is to play the Devil; and Hell it self scarce will own a fouler practice.

Jud. 1c;

3. We

3. We should not cast reproach upon any man without some necessary reason. In charity (that *Charity* which *covereth all sins*, which *covereth a multitude of sins*) we are bound to connive at the defects, and to conceal the faults of our brethren; to extenuate and excuse them, when apparent, so far as we may with truth and equity. We must not therefore ever produce them to light, or prosecute them with severity, except very needfull occasion urgeth: such as is the glory and service of God, the maintenance of truth, the vindication of innocence, the preservation of publick justice and peace; the amendment of our Neighbour himself, or securing others from contagion. Barring such reasons, (really being, not affectedly pretended,) we are bound not so much as to disclose, as to touch our Neighbour's faults; much more not to blaze them about, not to exaggerate them by vehement invectives.

4. We should never speak ill of any man beyond measure: be the cause never so just, the occasion never so necessary, we should yet no-wise be immoderate therein, exceeding the bounds prescribed by truth, equity, and huma-

M 2

nity.

Prov. 10. 12.

1 Pet. 4. 8.

1 Cor. 13. 4.

nity. We should never speak worse of any man what-ever then he certainly deserveth, according to the most favourable construction of his doings; never more then the cause absolutely requireth. We should rather be carefull to fall short of what in rigorous truth might be said against him, then in the least to passe beyond it. The best cause had better seem to suffer a little by our reservednesse in its defence, then any man be wronged by our aspersing him; for God, the patron of truth and right, is ever able to secure them without the succour of our unjust and uncharitable dealing. The contrary practice hath indeed within it a spice of Slander, that is, of the worst iniquity.

5. We must never speak ill of any man out of bad principles, or for bad ends.

Eph. 4. 31.
Col. 3. 8.

No sudden or rash Anger should instigate us thereto. For, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice,* is the Apostolical precept: they are all associates and kindred, which are to be cast away together. Such anger it self is culpable, as a work of the flesh, and therefore to be

be suppressed; and all its brood therefore is also to be smothered: the daughter of such a mother cannot be legitimate. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* Jam. 1. 20.

We must not speak ill out of inveterate Hatred or Ill-will. For this murderous, this viperous disposition should it self be rooted out of our hearts: whatever issueth from it cannot be otherwise then very bad; it must be a poisonous breath that exhalet from that foul source.

We must not be provoked thereto by any Revengefull disposition, or rancorous Spleen, in regard to any injuries or discourtesies received. For, as we must not revenge our selves, or render evil in any other way; so particularly not in this, which is commonly the speciall instance expressly prohibited. *Render not evil for evil,* (saith Saint Peter) *nor railing for railing; but contrariwise blesse,* or speak well: and, *Blesse them* (saith our Lord) *which curse you; Bles* (saith Saint Paul) *and curse not.* 1 Pet. 3. 9. Mat. 5. 44. Rom. 12. 14.

We must not also doe it out of Contempt: for we are not to slight our brethren in our hearts. No man real-

*He that is
void of wise-
dom despiseth
his neighbour.
Prov. 11. 12.*

Prov. 17. 5.

ly (considering what he is, whence he came, how he is related, what he is capable of) can be despicable. Extreme naughtinesse is indeed contemptible; but the unhappy person that is engaged therein, is rather to be pitied, then despised. However, Charity bindeth us to stifle contemptuous motions of heart, and not to vent them in vilifying expression. Particularly, it is a barbarous practice, out of contempt to reproach persons for natural imperfections, for meannesse of condition, for unlucky disasters, for any involuntary defects: this being indeed to reproach Mankind, unto which such things are incident; to reproach Providence, from the disposal whereof they do proceed. *Who so mocketh the poor, despiseth his Maker*, saith the Wise-man: and the same may be said of him that reproachfully mocketh him that is dull in parts, deformed in body, weak in health or strength, defective in any such way.

Likewise we must not speak ill out of Envy; because others do excell us in any good quality, or exceed us in fortune. To harbour this base and ugly disposition in our minds, is unworthy of a Man, (who should delight in all

all good springing up any-where, and befalling any man, naturally allied unto him ;) it is most unworthy of a Christian, who should tender his brother's good as his own, and *rejoyce with those that rejoyce.* From thence to be drawn to cast reproach upon any man, is horrible and hainous wickednesse. Rom. 12. 15.

Neither should we ever use reproach as a means of compassing any Design we do affect or aim at : 'tis an unwarrantable engine of raising us to wealth, dignity, or repute. To grow by the diminution, to rise by the depression, to shine by the eclipse of others, to build a fortune upon the ruines of our Neighbour's reputation, is that which no honourable mind can affect, no honest man will endeavour. Our own wit, courage, and industry, managed with God's assistance and blessing, are sufficient, and onely lawfull instruments of prosecuting honest enterprises ; we need not, we must not in stead of them employ our Neighbour's disgrace : no worldly good is worth purchasing at such a rate, no project worth atchieving by such foul ways.

Neither should we out of Malignity, to cherish or gratify ill humour, use

this practice. It is observable of some persons, that not out of any formed displeasure; grudge, or particular disaffection, nor out of any particular design, but meerly out of a *κακὸς χαρακτήρ*, an ill disposition, springing up from nature, or contracted by use, they are apt to carp at any action, and with sharp reproach to bite any man that comes in their way, thereby feeding and soothing that evil inclination. But as this inhumane and currish humour should be corrected, and extirpated from our hearts; so should the issues thereof at our mouths be stopped: the bespattering our Neighbour's good name should never afford any satisfaction or delight unto us.

Nor out of Wantonnesse should we speak ill, for our divertisement or sport. For our Neighbour's reputation is too great and precious a thing to be played with, or offered up to sport; we are very foolish in so disvaluing it, very naughty in so misusing it. Our wits are very barren, our brains are ill furnished with store of knowledge, if we can find no other matter of conversation.

Nor

Nor out of Negligence and inadvertency should we sputter out reproachfull speech; shooting ill words at rovers, or not regarding who stands in our way. Among all temerities this is one of the most noxious, and therefore very culpable.

In fine, we should never speak concerning our Neighbour from any other principle then Charity, or to any other intent but what is charitable; such as tendeth to his good, or at least is consistent therewith. *Let all your things* 1 Cor. 16. 14. *(saith S. Paul) be done in charity:* and words are most of the *things* we doe concerning our Neighbour, wherein we may expresse Charity. In all our speeches therefore touching him, we should plainly shew, that we have a care of his reputation, that we tender his interest, that we even desire his content and repose. Even when reason and need do so require, that we should disclose and reprehend his faults, we may, we should by the manner and scope of our speech signify thus much. Which rule were it observed, if we should never speak ill otherwise then out of charity, surely most Ill-speaking would be cut off; most, I fear, of our
tattling

tattling about others, much of our gossiping would be marr'd.

Prov. 15. 26.
& 16. 24.

Indeed so far from bitter or sour our language should be, that it ought to be sweet and pleasant ; so far from rough and harsh, that it should be courteous and obliging ; so far from signifying wrath, ill-will, contempt, or animosity, that it should expresse tender affection, good esteem, sincere respect toward our brethren ; and be apt to produce the like in them toward us: the sense of them should be gratefull to the heart ; the very sound and accent of them should be delightfull to the ear. *Every one should please his neighbour for his good to edification.* Our

Rom. 15. 2.

1 Cor. 10. 33.

Col. 4. 6.

Charitas—
cum arguit
mitis est, cum
blanditur
simplex est :
piè solet sa-
vire, sine dolo
mulcere ; pa-
tienter novit
irasci, humi-
liter indigna-
ri. S. Bern.
Ep. 2.

words should always be *ἐν χάριτι*, with grace, seasoned with salt ; they should have the grace of courtesie, they should be seasoned with the salt of discretion, so as to be sweet and savoury to the hearers. Commonly ill language is a certain sign of inward enmity and ill-will. Good-will is wont to shew it self in good terms ; it cloatheth even its grief handsomely, and its displeasure carrieth favour in its face : its rigour is civil and gentle, temper'd with pity for the faults and errors which it disliketh, with

with the desire of their amendment and recovery whom it reprehendeth. It would inflict no more evil then is necessary ; it would cure its Neighbour's disease without exasperating his patience , troubling his modesty, or impairing his credit. As it always judgeth candidly, so it never condemneth extremely.

II. But so much for the explication of this Precept, and the directive part of our discourse, I shall now briefly propound some inducements to the observance thereof.

I. Let us consider, that nothing more then railing and reviling is opposite to the nature, and inconsistent with the tenour of our Religion; the which (as even a Heathen did observe of it)

nil nisi justum suadet, & lenē, doth recommend nothing but what is very just and mild: which propoundeth the practices of Charity, Meeknesse, Patience, Peaceablenesse, Moderation, Equity, Alacrity or good humour, as its principal laws, and declareth them the chief fruits of

Ammian. Marcell.

Lingua Christum confessa non sit maledica, non turbulenta, non conviciis & litibus perstrepsens audiat. Cypr. de Unit. Eccl.

Conviciis & maledictis quæso vos abstinete; quia neque maledici regnum Dei consequentur; & lingua quæ Christum confessa est, incolumis & pura cum suo honore servanda est. Cypr. Ep. 7.

the

1 Pet. 4. 8.

the Divine Spirit, and Grace : which chargeth us to curb and compose all our Passions ; more particularly to restrain and repress Anger, Animosity, Envy, Malice, and such like dispositions, as the fruits of carnality and corrupt lust : which consequently drieth up all the sources, or dammeth up the sluices of bad language. As it doth *above all things* oblige us to bear no ill-will in our hearts, so it chargeth us to vent none with our mouths.

Psal. 64. 3.

2. It is therefore often expressly condemned and prohibited as evil. 'Tis the property of the wicked, a character of those who *work iniquity*, to *whet their tongues like a sword*, and *bend their bows to shoot their arrows*, even *bitter words*.

1 Cor. 5. 11.

3. No practice hath more severe punishments denounced to it then this. The Railer (and it is indeed a very proper and fit punishment for him, he being exceedingly-bad company) is to be banished out of all good Society; thereto S. Paul adjudgeth him : *I have* (saith he) *now written unto you*, *not to keep company*, *if any man that is called a brother be a fornicatour, or covetous, or an idolater, or a Railer, or a drunken*

drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one not to eat. Ye see what company the Railer hath in the Text, and with what a crew of people he is coupled: but no good company he is allowed other-where; every good Christian should avoid him as a blot, and a pest of conversation: and finally he is sure to be excluded from the blessed Society above in Heaven; for * — *neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor Revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God:* and, || *Without* (without the heavenly city) *are Dogs,* (saith S. John in his *Revelation,*) that is, those chiefly, who out of curriish spite or malignity do frowardly bark at their Neighbours, or cruelly bite them with reproachfull language.

*Hinc intelligere possumus quàm gravis sit & pernicioſa maledictio, quando, etiamſi alia bona adſuerint, ſola excludit à cælo. Salv. de Gubern. Dei lib. 3. * 1 Cor. 6. 10. || Apoc. 22. 15.*

4. If we look upon ſuch language in its own nature, what is it but a ſymptome of a foul, a weak, a diſordered and diſtempered mind? 'Tis the ſmoak of inward rage and malice: 'tis a ſtream that cannot iſſue from a ſweet ſpring: 'tis a ſtorm, that cannot bluſter out of a calm region. *The words of the pure* Prov. 15. 26. *are pleaſant words,* as the Wiſe-man ſaith.

5. This

5. This practice doth plainly signify low spirit, ill breeding, and bad manners ; and thence misbecometh any wise, any honest, any honourable person. It agreeth to Children, who are unapt, and unaccustomed to deal in matters considerable, to squabble ; to Women of meanest rank, (apt by nature, or custome, to be transported with passion,) to scold. In our modern languages it is termed *Villany*, as being proper for rustick Boors, or men of coursest education and employment ; who, having their minds debased by being conversant in meanest affairs, do vent their sorry passions, and bicker about their petty concernments, in such strains ; who also, being not capable of a fair reputation, or sensible of disgrace to themselves, do little value the credit of others, or care for aspersing it. But such language is unworthy of those persons, and cannot easily be drawn from them, who are wont to exercise their thoughts about nobler matters, who are versed in affairs manageable onely by calm deliberation and fair persuasion, not by impetuous and provocative rudenesse ; the which do never work otherwise upon masculu-

masculine souls, then so as to procure disdain, and resistance. Such persons, knowing the benefit of a good name, being wont to possesse a good repute, prizing their own credit as a considerable good, will never be prone to be-leave others of the like by opprobrious speech. A noble enemy will never speak of his enemy in bad terms.

*In quo admiri-
vari soleo gra-
vitatem &
justitiam &*

*sapientiam Caesaris, qui nunquam nisi honorificentissime Pompeium ap-
pellat. Cic. Epist. Tom. 6. 6.*

We may farther consider, that all wise, all honest, all ingenuous persons have an aver-sation from ill speaking, and cannot entertain it with any acceptance or complacence; that onely ill-natured, unworthy and naughty people are its willing auditours, or do abett it with applause. The good man, in the 15.

Psalm, non accipit opprobrium, doth *Psalm. 15. 3.*

not take up, or accept, a reproach against

his neighbour: but A wicked doer (saith

Prov. 17. 4.

the Wise-man) giveth heed to false lips, and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

And what reasonable man will doe that which is disgustfull to the wise and good, is gratefull onely to the foolish and baser sort of men? I pretermit, that

It is always
taken as an
argument of
ill-will.

*Maledicus à
malefico non
distat, nisi oc-
casione.*

Quint. 12. 9.

that using this sort of language doth incapacitate a man for to benefit his Neighbour, and defeateth his endeavours for his edification, disparaging a good cause, prejudicing the defence of truth, obstructing the effects of good instruction, and wholesome reproof; as we did before remark and declare. Farther,

8. He that useth this kind of speech doth, as harm and trouble others, so create many great inconveniencies and mischiefs to himself thereby. Nothing so enflameth the wrath of men, so provoketh their enmity, so breedeth lasting hatred and spite, as do contumelious words. They are often * called *swords* and *arrows*; and as such they pierce deeply, and cause most grievous smart; which men feeling are enraged, and accordingly will strive to || requite them in the like manner, and in all other obvious ways of revenge. Hence strife, clamour and tumult, care, suspicion and fear, danger and trouble, sorrow and regret, do seise on the Reviler; and he is sufficiently punished for this dealing. No man can otherwise then live in perpetual fear of reciprocal like usage from him, whom he is conscious of

* the scourge
of the tongue,
Job 5. 21.

Prov. 12. 18.
*There is that
speaketh like
the piercings
of a sword.*

Psal. 57. 4.

& 59. 7.

& 64. 3.

Psal. 52. 2.

sharp rasour.

Prov. 30. 14.
knives.

|| *The froward
tongue shall be
cut out,*

Prov. 10. 31.

of having so abused. Whence, if not justice, or charity toward others, yet love, and pity of our selves, should persuade us to forbear it as disquietfull, incommodious, and mischievous to us.

We should indeed certainly enjoy much love, much concord, much quiet, we should live in great safety and security, we should be exempted from much care and fear, if we would restrain our selves from abusing and offending our Neighbour in this kind: being conscious of so just and innocent demeanour toward him, we should converse with him in a pleasant freedom and confidence, not suspecting any bad language or ill usage from him.

9. Hence with evidently-good reason is he that useth such language called a *Fool*, and he that abstaineth from it is commended as *wise*. *A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. He that refraineth his tongue is wise. In the tongue of the wise is health. He that keepeth his lips keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his mouth (that is, in evil-speaking, gaping with clamour and vehemency) shall have destruction.*

Prov. 18. 6, 7.

Prov. 10. 19.

Prov. 12. 18.

Prov. 13. 3.

N

struction.

Eccles 10. 12. *struction. The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious : but the lips of a*
 Prov. 18. 21. *fool will swallow up himself. Death and life are in the power of the tongue ; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof ; that is, of the one or the other, answerably to the kind of speech they chuse.*

In fine, very remarkable is that advice, or resolution of the grand point concerning the best way of living happily, in the Psalmist : *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good ? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.* Abstinence from ill speaking he seemeth to propose as the first step toward the fruition of a durably-happy life.

10. Lastly, we may consider, that it is a grievous perverting the design of Speech, (that excellent faculty, which so much distinguisheth us from, so highly advanceth us above other creatures,) to use it to the defaming and disquieting our Neighbour. It was given us as an instrument of beneficial commerce, and delectable conversation ; that with it we might assist and advise, might cheer and comfort one another : we therefore in employing it
 to

to the disgrace, vexation, damage, or prejudice in any kind of our Neighbour, do foully abuse it; and so doing, render our selves indeed worse then dumb beasts: for, * better far it were that we could say nothing, then that we should speak ill.

* *Mutos nati, & egere omni ratione satius fuisset, quam providentie munera in mutam perniciem convertere.*
Quint. 12. 1.

Now the God of grace and peace—
make us perfect in every good work to doe his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

Heb. 13.
20, 21.

N 2

The



The Fifth Sermon.

PROV. 10. 18.

He that uttereth Slander is a Fool.

General Declamations against Vice and Sin are indeed excellently usefull, as rouzing men to consider and look about them: but they do often want effect, because they onely raise confused apprehensions of things, and indeterminate propensions to action; the which usually, before men throughly perceive or resolve what they should practise, do decay and vanish. As he that cries out fire doth stir up people, and inspireth them with a kind of hovering tendency every way; yet no man thence to purpose moveth, untill he be distinctly informed where the mischief is; then do they, who apprehend themselves concerned, run hastily to oppose it: So,

N 3 till

till we particularly discern where our offences lie, (till we distinctly know the hainous nature and the mischievous consequences of them,) we scarce will effectually apply our selves to correct them. Whence it is requisite, that men should be particularly acquainted with their sins, and by proper arguments be dissuaded from them.

In order whereto I have now selected one sin to describe, and dissuade from, being in nature as vile, and in practice as common, as any other whatever that hath prevailed among men. It is Slander, a sin which in all times and places hath been epidemical and rise; but which especially doth seem to reign and rage in our Age and Country.

There are principles innate to men, which ever have, and ever will incline them to this offence. Eager appetites to secular and sensual goods; violent passions, urging the prosecution of what men affect; wrath and displeasure against those who stand in the way of compassing their desires; emulation and envy toward those who hap to succeed better, or to attain a greater share in such things; excessive self-love; un-

account-

accountable malignity and vanity, are in some degrees connatural to all men, and ever prompt them to this dealing, as appearing the most efficacious, compendious and easie way of satisfying such appetites, of promoting such designs, of discharging such passions. Slander thence hath always been a principal engine, whereby covetous, ambitious, envious, ill-natured and vain persons have strove to supplant their competitours, and advance themselves; meaning thereby to procure, what they chiefly prize and like, wealth, or dignity, or reputation, favour and power in the court, respect and interest with the people.

But from especial causes our Age peculiarly doth abound in this practice: for, besides the common dispositions inclining thereto, there are conceits newly coined, and greedily entertained by many, which seem purposely levelled at the disparagement of Piety, Charity, and Justice, substituting Interest in the room of Conscience, authorizing and commending, for good and wise, all ways serving to private advantage. There are implacable dissensions, fierce animosities, and bitter zeals sprung up;

there is an extreme curiosity, nicenesse, and delicacy of judgement ; there is a mighty affectation of seeming wise and witty by any means ; there is a great unsettlement of mind, and corruption of manners, generally diffused over people : from which sources it is no wonder that this flood hath so overflowed, that no banks can restrain it, no fences are able to resist it ; so that ordinary conversation is full with it, and no demeanour can be secure from it.

If we do mark what is done in many (might I not say, in most ?) companies, what is it, but one telling malicious stories of, or fastning odious characters upon another ? What do men commonly please themselves in so much, as in carping and harshly censuring, in defaming and abusing their Neighbours ? Is it not the sport and divertisement of many, to cast dirt in the faces of all they meet with ; to bespatter any man with foul imputations ? Doth not in every corner a *Momus* lurk, from the venome of whose spitefull or petulant tongue no eminency of rank, dignity of place, or sacrednesse of office, no innocence or integrity of life, no wisdom

dom or circumspection in behaviour, no good nature, or benignity in dealing and carriage, can protect any person? Do not men assume to themselves a liberty of telling Romances, and framing characters concerning their Neighbour, as freely as a Poet doth about *Hector* or *Turnus*, *Thersites* or *Draucus*? Do they not usurp a power of playing with, of tossing about, of tearing in pieces their Neighbour's good name, as if it were the veriest toy in the world? Do not many, *having a form of godliness*, (some of them demurely, others confidently, both without any sense of, or remorse for what they doe,) backbite their brethren? Is it not grown so common a thing to asperse causelessly, that no man wonders at it, that few dislike, that scarce any detest it? that most notorious Calumniatours are heard, not onely with patience, but with pleasure; yea are even held in vogue and reverence, as men of a notable talent, and very serviceable to their party? so that Slander seemeth to have lost its nature, and not to be now an odious sin, but a fashionable humour, a way of pleasing entertainment, a fine knack, or curious feat of policy; so that no
man

man at least taketh himself or others to be accountable for what is said in this way? Is not, in fine, the case become such, that whoever hath in him any love of truth, any sense of justice or honesty, any spark of charity toward his brethren, shall hardly be able to satisfy himself in the conversations he meeteth; but will be tempted, with the Holy Prophet, to wish himself sequestred from society, and cast into solitude; repeating those words of his, *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they are— an assembly of treacherous men, and they bend their tongues like their bow for lies?* This he wished in an Age so resembling ours, that I fear the description with equal patnesse may fute both: *Take ye heed* (said he then, and may we not advise the like now?) *every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.*

Such

Jer. 9. 2, 3.

& 6. 28.

Ezek. 22. 9.

Jer. 9. 4, 5.

Such being the state of things, obvious to experience, no discourse may seem more needfull, or usefull, then that which serveth to correct or check this practice: the which I shall endeavour to doe, 1. by describing the Nature, 2. by declaring the Folly of it; or shewing it to be very true which the Wise-man here asserteth, *He that uttereth Slander is a Fool*. The which particulars I hope so to prosecute, that any man shall be able easily to discern, and ready heartily to detest this practice.

I. For explication of its Nature, we may describe Slander to be the uttering false (or equivalent to false, morally false) speech against our Neighbour, in prejudice to his fame, his safety, his welfare, or concernment in any kind, out of malignity, vanity, rashness, ill nature, or bad design. That which is in Holy Scripture forbidden and reprov'd under several names and notions; of ^a bearing false witness, ^b false accusation, ^c railing censure, ^d sycophantry, ^e tale-bearing, ^f whispering, ^g backbiting, ^h supplanting, ⁱ taking up reproach: which terms some of them do signifie the nature, others denote the special kinds, others

^a Exod. 20.

16.

^b Psal. 35. 11.

^c Jud. 9.

^d 2 Pet. 2. 11.

^e Luk. 3. 14.

& 19. 8.

^f Levit. 19. 16.

Prov. 18. 8.

& 26. 20.

^g Prov. 16. 28.

Rom. 1. 29.

^h 2 Cor. 12. 20.

ⁱ Psal. 15. 3.

Rom. 1. 30.

^b Jer. 9. 4.

^c Psal. 15. 3.

others imply the maners, others suggest the ends of this practice. But it seemeth most fully intelligible by observing the severall kinds and degrees thereof; as also by reflecting on the divers ways and manners of practising it.

The principall kinds thereof I observe to be these.

- I. The grossest kind of Slander is that which in the Decalogue is called *Bearing false testimony against our neighbour*; that is, flatly charging him with facts the which he never committed, and is no wise guilty of. As in the case of *Naboth*, when men were suborned to say, *Naboth did blaspheme God and the King*: and as was *David's* case, when he thus complained, *False witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not of*. This kind in the highest way (that is, in judicial proceedings) is more rare; and of all men, they who are detected to practise it, are held most vile and infamous; as being plainly the most pernicious and perillous instruments of injustice, the most desperate enemies of all mens right and safety that can be. But also out of the Court there are many Knights errant of the post, whose business

1 King. 21. 13.

Psal. 35. 11.

business it is to run about scattering false reports ; sometimes loudly proclaiming them in open companies , sometimes closely whispering them in dark corners ; thus infecting conversation with their poisonous breath : these no lesse notoriously are guilty of this kind, as bearing always the same malice, and sometimes breeding as ill effects.

2. Another kind is, Affixing scandalous names, injurious epithets, and odious characters upon persons, which they deserve not. As when *Corah* and his complices did accuse *Moses* of being ambitious, unjust, and tyrannical : when the Pharisees called our Lord an Im-

Num. 16.
3, 13, 14.

postour, a Blasphemer, a Sorcerer, a Glutton and Wine-bibber, an Incendiary, and Perverter of the people, one that *spake against Cæsar*, and *forbad to give tribute* : when the Apostles were charged of being * pestilent, turbulent, factious and seditious fellows. This

John 19. 7, 21.
Matt. 26. 65.
Matt. 9. 3.
& 12. 24.
Matt. 11. 19.
Luk. 23. 2,
5, 14.
John 19. 12.
Luk. 23. 2.
* Act. 17. 6.
& 24. 5.

sort being very common, and thence in ordinary repute not so bad, yet in just estimation may be judged even worse then the former ; as doing to our Neighbour more heavy and more irreparable wrong. For it imposeth on him

him really more blame, and that such which he can hardly shake off: because the charge signifieth habit of evil, and includeth many acts; then, being general and indefinite, can scarce be disproved. He, for instance, that calleth a sober man Drunkard, doth impute to him many acts of such intemperance; (some really past, others probably future;) and no particular time or place being specified, how can a man clear himself of that imputation, especially with those who are not thoroughly acquainted with his conversation? So he that calleth a man unjust, proud, perverse, hypocritical, doth load him with most grievous faults, which it is not possible that the most innocent person should discharge himself from.

3. Like to that kind is this, Aspersing a man's actions with harsh censures, and foul terms, importing that they proceed from ill principles, or tend to bad ends; so, as it doth not, or cannot appear. Thus when we say of him that is generously hospitable, that he is profuse; of him that is prudently frugal, that he is niggardly; of him that is chearfull and free in his conversation, that he is vain or loose; of him that is serious and

At nos virtutes ipsas invertimus, atque Sincera cupimus vas in-crustare. pro-bus quis

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and resolute in a good way, that he is fullen or morose ; of him that is conspicuous and brisk in vertuous practice, that it is ambition or ostentation which acts him ; of him that is close and bashfull in the like good way, that it is sneaking stupidity, or want of spirit ; of him that is reserved, that it is craft ; of him that is open, that it is simplicity in him : when we ascribe a man's liberality and charity to vain-glory, or popularity ; his strictnesse of life, and constancy in devotion, to superstition, or hypocrisie. When, I say, we passe such censures, or impose such characters on the laudable or innocent practice of our Neighbours, we are indeed Slanderers, imitating therein the great Calumniatour, who thus did slander even God himself, imputing his prohibition of the Fruit unto envy toward men ; (*God, said he, doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil ;*) who thus did ascribe the steddy Piety of *Job*, not to a conscientious love and fear of God, but to policy, and selfish design, *Doth Job fear God for nought ?*

Nobiscum vivit ? multum est demissus homo. illi Tardo cognomen pinguis damus. &c. optimé. Hor. Sermon. 1. 3. Vid. Sidon. Apoll.

Gen. 3. 5.

Job 1. 9. & 2. 4.

Who-

Whoever indeed pronounceth concerning his Neighbour's intentions otherwise then as they are evidently expressed by words, or signified by overt actions, is a Slanderer ; because he pretendeth to know, and dareth to averr, that which he no-ways possibly can tell whether it be true ; because the heart is exempt from all jurisdiction here, is onely subject to the government and trial of another world ; because no man can judge concerning the truth of such accusations ; because no man can exempt, or defend himself from them : so that apparently such practice doth thwart all course of justice and equity.

Jer. 23. 36.

Πάντα πρᾶγμα
ἔχει δύο λα-
βὰς. Epist.

4. Another kind is, Perverting a man's words or actions disadvantageously by affected misconstruction. All words are ambiguous, and capable of different senses, (some fair, some more foul ;) all actions have two handles, one that candour and charity will, another that disingenuity and spite may lay hold on : and in such cases, to misapprehend is a calumnious procedure, arguing malignant disposition and mischievous design. Thus when two men did witnesse, that our Lord affirmed, he

he could demolish the temple, and rear it again in three days ; although he did indeed speak words to that purpose, meaning them in a figurative sense ; (discernible enough to those who would candidly have minded his drift and way of speaking ;) yet they who crudely alleged them against him are called false witnesses. (*At last, saith the Gospel, came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple, &c.*) Thus also when some certified of S. Stephen, as having said, that *Jesus of Nazareth should destroy that place, and change the customs that Moses delivered* ; although probably he did speak words near to that purpose, yet are those men called false witnesses : *And (saith S. Luke) they set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words, &c.* Which instances plainly do shew, if we would avoid the guilt of Slander, how carefull we should be to interpret fairly and favourably the words and the actions of our Neighbour.

5. Another sort of this practice is, Partial and lame representation of mens discourse, or their practice ; suppressing some part of the truth in them, or concealing

Matt. 26. 60,

61.

Joh. 2. 19.

Psal. 56. 5.

Every day
they wrest my
words.

Matt. ubi
supra.

Act. 6. 13,

14.

cealing some circumstances about them, which might serve to explain, to excuse, or to extenuate them. In such a manner easily, without uttering any Logical untruth, one may yet grievously calumniate. Thus suppose that a man speaketh a thing upon supposition, or with exception, or in way of objection, or meerly for disputation sake, in order to the discussion or clearing of truth; he that should report him asserting it absolutely, unlimitedly, positively and peremptorily, as his own settled judgment, would notoriously calumniate. If one should be inveigled by fraud, or driven by violence, or slip by chance into a bad place, or bad company; he that should so represent the grosse of that accident, as to breed an opinion of that person, that out of pure disposition and design he did put himself there, doth slanderously abuse that innocent person. The reporter in such cases must not think to defend himself by pretending that he spake nothing false; for such propositions, however true in Logick, may justly be deemed lies in morality, being uttered with a malicious and deceitfull (that is, with a calumnious) mind, being apt to im-
presse

preſſe falſe conceits, and to produce hurtfull effects concerning our Neighbour. There are ſlanderous truths, as well as ſlanderous falſhoods: when truth is uttered with a deceitfull heart, and to a baſe end, it becomes a lie. *He that ſpeaketh truth,* (ſaith the Wiſe-man) *ſheweth forth righteousneſſe: but a falſe witneſſe, deceit.* Deceiving is the proper work of Slander; and truth abuſed to that end putteth on its nature, and will engage into like guilt.

6. Another kind of Calumny is, by Inſtilling ſly ſuggeſtions; which although they do not downrightly aſſert falſhoods, yet they breed ſiniſter opinions in the hearers; eſpecially in thoſe who, from weakneſſe or credulity, from jealousie or prejudice, from negligence or inadvertency, are prone to entertain them. This is done many ways; by propounding wily ſuppoſitions, ſhrewd inſinuations, crafty queſtions, and ſpecious compariſons, intimating a poſſibility, or inferring ſome likelihood of, and thence inducing to believe the fact. Doth not (ſaith this kind of Slanderer) his temper incline him to doe thus? may not his intereſt have ſwayed him thereto? had he not fair opportunity

Vld. Hermi Paſtor. where the Paſtor obſerves, that the Devil doth in his temptations inreſperſe ſome truths, ſerving to render his deluſions paſſable.

and strong temptation to it? hath he not acted so in like cases? Judge you therefore whether he did it not. Thus the close Slanderer argueth; and a weak or prejudiced person is thereby so caught, that he presently is ready thence to conclude the thing done. Again; He doeth well, (saith the Sycophant) it is true; but why, and to what end? Is it not, as most men do, out of ill design? may he not dissemble now? may he not recoil hereafter? have not others made as fair a show? yet we know what came of it. Thus do calumnious tongues pervert the judgments of men to think ill of the most innocent, and meanly of the worthiest actions. Even commendation it self is often used calumniously, with intent to breed dislike and ill-will toward a person commended in envious or jealous ears; or so as to give passage to dispraises, and render the accusations following more credible. 'Tis an artifice commonly observed to be much in use there, where the finest tricks of supplanting are practised, with greatest effect; so that, *pejssimum inimicorum genus, laudantes*; there is no more pestilent enemy, then a *malevolent praiser.

* *excusando
exprobraret.*
Tac. Ann. I.
p. 10.

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fer. All these kinds of dealing, as they
 issue from the principles of Slander, and
 perform its work, so they deservedly
 bear the guilt thereof.

καινος τις
 ευρηται τρε-
 πος εταρος
 της διαβολης,
 το μη λεγον-
 τας, αλλ' επ-

ανυψηται λυμαινεος τος πηλας. Polyb. lib. 4.

7. A like kind is that of Oblique and
 covert reflexions; when a man doth not
 directly or expressly charge his Neigh-
 bour with faults, but yet so speaketh,
 that he is understood, or reasonably pre-
 sumed to doe it. This is a very cunning
 and very mischievous way of Slandering;
 for therein the sculking Calumniatour
 keepeth a reserve for himself, and cut-
 teth off from the person concerned the
 means of defence. If he goeth to clear
 himself from the matter of such asperfi-
 ons: What need (saith this insidious
 speaker) of that? must I needs mean
 you? did I name you? why do you
 then assume it to your self? do you
 not prejudge your self guilty? I did
 not, but your own Conscience it see-
 meth doth accuse you. You are so jea-
 lous and suspicious, as persons over-
 wise or guilty use to be. So meaneth
 this serpent out of the hedge securely
 and unavoidably to bite his Neighbour;
 and is in that respect more base and

O 3

more

more hurtfull then the most flat and positive Slanderer.

Matt. 7. 3.

8. Another kind is that of Magnifying and aggravating the faults of others; raising any small miscarriage into a heinous crime, any slender defect into an odious vice, and any common infirmity into a strange enormity; turning a small *mote in the eye* of our Neighbour into a huge *beam*, a little dimple in his face into a monstrous wen. This is plainly Slander, at least in degree, and according to the surplussage whereby the censure doth exceed the fault. As he that, upon the score of a small debt, doth extort a great summe, is no lesse a thief, in regard to what amounts beyond his due, then if without any pretence he had violently or fraudulently seised on it: so is he a Slanderer, that, by heightning faults or imperfections, doth charge his Neighbour with greater blame, or loads him with more disgrace then he deserves. 'Tis not onely Slander to pick a hole where there is none, but to make that wider which is, so that it appeareth more ugly, and cannot so easily be mended. For Charity is wont to extenuate faults, Justice doth never exaggerate them. As no man is exempt from

from some defects, or can live free from some misdemeanours; so by this practice every man may be rendred very odious and infamous.

9. Another kind of Slander is, Imputing to our Neighbour's practice, judgment, or profession, evil consequences (apt to render him odious, or despicable) which have no dependence on them, or connexion with them. There do in every Age occur disorders and mishaps, springing from various complications of causes, working some of them in a more open and discernible, others in a more secret and subtle way; (especially from Divine judgment and Providence checking or chastizing Sin:) from such occurrences it is common to snatch occasion and matter of Calumny. Those who are disposed this way, are ready peremptorily to charge them upon whom-ever they dislike or dissent from, although without any apparent cause, or upon most frivolous and senselesse pretences; yea, often, when Reason sheweth the quite contrary, and they who are so charged are in just esteem of all men the least obnoxious to such accusations. So usually the best friends of mankind,

those who most heartily wish the peace and prosperity of the world, and most earnestly to their power strive to promote them, have all the disturbances and disasters happening charged on them by those fiery *Vixons*, who (in pursuance of their base designs, or gratification of their wild passions) really do themselves embroil things, and raise miserable combustions in the world. So it is, that they who have the conscience to doe mischief, will have the confidence also to disavow the blame and the iniquity, to lay the burthen of it on those who are most innocent. Thus, whereas nothing more disposeth men to live orderly and peaceably, nothing more conduceth to the settlement and safety of the publick, nothing so much draweth blessings down from Heaven upon the Common-weal, as true Religion; yet nothing hath been more ordinary, then to attribute all the miscarriages and mischiefs that happened, unto it : even those are laid at its door, which plainly do arise from the contempt or neglect of it ; being the natural fruits, or the just punishments, of Irreligion. King *Ahab* by *sprfaking God's commandments*, and following

1 King. 18.
17, 18.

lowing wicked superstitions, had troubled Israel, drawing sore judgments and calamities thereon ; yet had he the heart and the face to charge those events on the great assertour of Piety, *Elias* : Art thou he that troubleth Israel ? The Jews by provocation of Divine justice had set themselves in a fair way toward desolation and ruine ; this event to come they had the presumption to lay upon the faith of our Lord's doctrine : If Joh. 11. 48. (said they) we let him alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come, and take away our place and nation : whenas, in truth, a compliance with his directions and admonitions had been the onely means to prevent those presaged mischiefs. And, *Sicut Tiberis ascenderit in mœnia*, if any publick calamity did appear, then *Christianos ad Leones*, Christians must be charged and persecuted as the causes thereof. To them it was that *Julian* and other Pagans did impute all the concussions, confusions, and devastations falling upon the *Romane* Empire. The *sacking of *Rome* by the *Goths* they cast upon Christianity : for the vindication of it from which reproach *Saint Austin* did write those renowned Books *de*

Tertull, Apol.

* *Christianis temporibus detrahunt, & mala quæ illa civitas per tulit, Christo*

imputant. *de Civitate Dei.* So liable are the best
De Civ. D. I. and most innocent sort of men to be
I. III. 31. calumniously accused in this manner.
They (saith that great
Father) detract from the Christian times, and impute the evils which
that city suffered, unto Christ.

|| το εὐαγγέ-
λιον τῆς
διαβολῆς.
M. Ant.

Another practice (worthily bearing
the guilt of Slander) is, || being Aiding
and accessory thereto, by any-wise fur-
thering, cherishing, abetting it. He
that by crafty significations of ill-will
doth prompt the Slanderer to vent his
poison; he that by a willing audience
and attention doth readily suck it up,
or who greedily swalloweth it down by

David, Psal. 101. 5.
Wh-so privily slandereth his
neighbour, him will I cut
off; ὅστις ἐξ ἐσώκων, him
have I driven away, say
the LXX.

Neque verò illa justa est
excusatio, Referentibus a-
liis injuriam facere non
possum. Nemo invito audi-
tori libenter refert. Sa-
gitta in lapidem nunquam
figitur; interdum resiliens
percutit dirigentem. Di-
scat detractor, dum te videt
non libenter audire, non
facile detrahere. Hier. ad
Nepot. Ep. 2.

credulous approbation and
assent; he that pleasingly re-
lisheth and smacketh at it, or
expresseth a delightfull com-
placence therein; as he is a
partner in the fact, so is he
a sharer in the guilt. There
are not onely slanderous
Throats, but slanderous Ears
also; not onely wicked In-
ventions, which ingender
and brood lies, but wicked
Assents, which hatch and
foster them. Not onely the
spitefull Mother which con-
ceiveth

ceiveth such spurious brats, but the Midwife that helpeth to bring them forth, the Nurse that feedeth them, the Guardian that traineth them up to maturity, and setteth them forth to live in the world, as they do really contribute to their subsistence, so deservedly they partake in the blame due to them, and must be responsible for the mischief they doe. For indeed were it not for such free entertainers, such nourishers, such encouragers of them, Slanders commonly would die in the womb, or prove still-born, or presently entring into the cold air would expire, or for want of nourishment soon would starve. It is such friends and patrons of them who are the causes that they are so rife; they it is who set ill-natured, base and designing people upon devising, searching after, and picking up malicious and idle stories. Were it not for such customers, the trade of Calumniating would fall. Many pursue it meerly out of servility and flattery, to tickle the ears, to sooth the humour,

Posidonius relateth of *S. Austin*, that he had upon his table written these two verses,

*Quisquis amat diis absentem videre vitam,
Hanc mensam indignam invenit esse sibi :*

(He that loveth by ill speech to gnaw the life of those who are absent, let him know himself unworthy to sit at this table; or, that this table is unfit for him :) and if any there did use detraction, he was offended, and minded them of those verses, threatening also to leave the table, and withdraw to his chamber. *Posid. cap. 2.1.*

humour, to gratifie the malignant disposition, or ill-will of others; who upon the least discouragement would give over the practice. If therefore we would exempt our selves from all guilt of Slander, we must not onely abstain from venting it, but forbear to ^a regard or countenance it: for, ^b *He is* (saith the Wise-man) *a wicked doer, who giveth heed to false lips; and a liar, who giveth ear to a naughty tongue.* Yea, if we thoroughly would be clear from it, we must shew an aversation from hearing it, an unwillingnesse to believe it, an indignation against it; so either stifling it in the birth, or condemning it to death being uttered. This is the sure way to destroy it, and to prevent its mischief. If we would ^c stop our ears, we should stop the Slanderer's mouth: if we would *resist the Calumniatour, he would fly from us*: if we would reprove him, we should repell him. For, As ^d *the north-wind driveth away rain, so* (the Wise-man telleth us) *doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.*

* Οὐ παρα-
δέξῃ ἀκού-
μα· τάλαν,
Thou shalt not
receive (or,
take up) a
false report,
saith the
Law, Exod.
23. 1.

^b Prov. 17. 4.
Beatus est,
qui ita se
contra hoc vi-
tium arma-
vit, ut apud
eum detrabe-
re nemo aude-
at. Hier. ad
Celantiam.

^c Hedge thy
ears with
thorns, &c.
Ecclus 28.
24. ita legit
Cyp. Ep. 55.

^d Prov. 25. 23. Ἄν μὴ θωσιν αἱ κακίαι οἱ ὅτι διαβαλλομένων μάλ-
λον ἢ μὲν αὐτοῦ ἀποσφραδίζουσα, παύσονται καὶ αὐτοὶ τότε τῆς πονηρίας
ταύτης συνηθίσαι, καὶ διορθώσονται τὸ σφάλμα, καὶ ἐπανέσονται μετὰ
ταῦτα καὶ ἡμᾶς αὐτοῦ, ὡς σωτήρες αὐτοῦ γενόμενοι, καὶ ἐνεργῆσαι ἀνακη-
ρύξαι. Chryf. Ἀνδρ. γ'.

These

These are the chief and most common kinds of Slander; and there are several ways of practising them worthy our observing, that we may avoid them; namely these.

1. The most notoriously-hainous way is, forging, and immediately venting ill stories. As it is said of *Doeg*, *Thy tongue deviseth mischief*; and of another like companion, *Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit*: and as our Lord saith of the Devil, *When he speaketh a lie, ἐκ ἑαυτοῦ λαλεῖ, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.* This palpably is the supreme pitch of Calumny, incapable of any qualification or excuse: Hell cannot goe beyond this; the cursed Fiend himself cannot worse employ his wit, then in minting wrongfull falsehoods.

Psal. 52. 2.

Psal. 50. 19.

Joh. 8. 44.
(Isa. 32. 7.)

2. Another way is, receiving from others, and venting such stories, which they who doe it certainly know, or may reasonably presume to be false: the becoming hucksters of counterfeit wares, or factours in this vile trade. There is no false coiner, who hath not some complices and emissaries ready to take from his hand, and put off his money:

mony : and such Slanderers at second hand are scarce lesse guilty then the first authours. He that breweth lies may have more wit and skill, but the broker sheweth the like malice and wickednesse. In this there is no great difference between the great Devil, that frameth scandalous reports, and the little Imps, that run about and disperse them.

3. Another way is, when one without competent examination, due weighing, and just reason, doth admit, and spread tales prejudicial to his Neighbour's welfare ; relying for his warrant (as to the truth of them) upon any slight or slender authority. This is a very common and current practice : men presume it lawfull enough to say over what-ever they hear ; to report any thing, if they can quote an authour for it. It is not, say they, my invention ; I tell it as I heard it : *sit fides penes authorem* ; let him that informed me undergoe the blame, if it prove false. So do they conceive themselves excusable for being the instruments of injurious disgrace and damage to their Neighbours. But they greatly mistake therein : for as this practice commonly doth

Τί διαπο-
ρεύει τὸν λό-
γον, &c ?

Chryl. in

Heb. 11. 3.

Δίον συγκα-
ζουσιν ἡ συγ-
κρίψιν τὰ

ἐλαττώματα

τῶν πλησίων

οὗ δ' ἐκπομ-
πύει, &c.

Ibid.

doth arise from the same wicked principles, at least in some degree, and produceth altogether the like mischievous effects, as the wilfull devising and conveying Slander: so it no lesse thwarteeth the rules of duty, and laws of equity; God hath prohibited it, and reason doth condemn it. *Thou shalt not* (saith God in the Law) *goe up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people:* Levit. 19. 16. as a tale-bearer, (as *Rachil*, that is,) as Prov. 18. 8. & 26. 22. a merchant or trader in ill reports and stories concerning our Neighbour, to his prejudice. Not onely the framing them, but the dealing in them beyond reason or necessity, is interdicted. And it is part of a Good man's character in the 15. Psalm, *Non accipit opprobrium, He taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour;* that is, he doth not easily entertain it, much lesse doth he effectually propagate it: and in our Text, *He, it is said, that uttereth Slander* (not onely he that conceiveth it) *is a Fool.* Psal. 15. 3.

And in reason, before exact trial and cognizance, to meddle with the fame and interest of another, is evidently a practice full of iniquity, such as no man can allow in his own case, or brook being

ing used toward himself, without judging himself to be extremely abused by such reporters. In all reason and equity, (yea in all discretion,) before we yield credence to any report concerning our Neighbour, or adventure to relate it, many things are carefully to be weighed and scanned. We should concerning our Authour consider, whether he be not a particular enemy, or disaffected to him; whether he be not ill-humoured, or a delighter in telling bad stories; whether he be not dishonest, or unregardfull of justice in his dealings and discourse; whether he be not vain, or carelesse of what he saith; whether he be not light and credulous, or apt to be imposed upon by any small appearance; whether at least in the present case he be not negligent, or too forward and rash in speaking. We should also concerning the Matter reported mind, whether it be possible, or probable; whether sutable to the disposition of our Neighbour, to his principles, to the constant tenour of his practice; whether the action imputed to him be not liable to misapprehension, or his words to misconstruction. All reason and equity do, I say,
exact

exact from us, diligently to consider such things, before we do either embrace our selves, or transmit unto others any story concerning our Neighbour; lest unadvisedly we doe him irreparable wrong and mischief. Briefly, we should take his case for our own, and consider whether we our selves should be content, that upon like grounds or testimonies any man should believe, or report disgracefull things concerning us. If we fail to doe thus, we do (vainly, or rashly, or maliciously) conspire with the Slanderer to the wrong of our innocent Neighbour; and that in the Psalmist (by a parity of reason) may be transferred to us, *Thou hast consented* Psal 50. 18. *unto the Liar, and hast partaken with the authour of Calumny.*

4. Of kin to this way is the assenting to popular rumours, and thence affirming matters of obloquy to our Neighbour. Every one by experience knows how easily false news do rise, and how nimbly they scatter themselves; how often they are raised from nothing, how soon they from small sparks grow into a great blaze, how easily from one thing they are transformed into another: especially news of this kind,

P

which

* *Plebi non
judicium, non
veritas. Tac.*

*Ann. 16.
Non est confi-
lium in vul-
go, non ratio,
non discrimen,
non diligen-
tia—ex opi-
nione pluri-
ma, ex veri-
tate pauca ju-
dicat. Cic. pro
Planco.*

*Δαὶ μὴ πῖ-
στεύε' πολὺ-
ῖες πῶς εἶναι
δύναται.*
Phocyl.

*Prov. 14. 15.
The simple
believeth e-
very word.*

Exod. 23. 2.

which do sute and feed the bad humour of the vulgar. 'Tis obvious to any man how true that is of *Tacitus*, how * void of consideration, of judgment, of equity, the busie and talking part of mankind is. Whoever therefore gives heed to flying tales, and thrusts himself into the herd of those who spread them, is either strangely injudicious, or very malignantly disposed. If he want not judgment, he cannot but know, that when he complieth with popular fame, it is meer chance that he doth not slander, or rather it is odds that he shall doe so: he consequently sheweth himself to be indifferent whether he doeth it or no, or rather that he doth encline to doe it: whence, not caring to be otherwise, or loving to be a Slanderer, he in effect and just esteem is such; having at least a slanderous heart and inclination. He that puts it to the venture whether he lieth or no, doth *eo ipso* lie morally, as declaring no care or love of truth. *Thou shalt not* (saith the Law) *follow a multitude to doe evil:* and with like reason we should not follow the multitude in speaking evil of our Neighbour.

5. Ano-

5. Another slanderous course is, to build censures and reproaches upon slender conjectures, or uncertain suspicions, (those *ὑποβόλαι πονηραί*, *evil surmises*, which S. Paul condemneth.) Of these occasion can never be wanting to them who seek them, or are ready to embrace them; no innocence, no wisdom can any-wise prevent them; and if they may be admitted as grounds of defamation, no man's good name can be secure. But he that upon such accounts dareth to asperse his Neighbour, is in moral computation no lesse a Slanderer, then if he did the like out of pure invention, or without any ground at all: for doubtfull and false in this case differ little; to devise, and to divine, in matters of this nature, do import near the same. He that will judge or speak ill of others, ought to be well assured of what he thinks or says: he that asserteth that which he doth not know to be true, doth as well lie, as he that affirmeth that which he knoweth to be false; (for he deceiveth the hearers, begetting in them an opinion that he is assured of what he affirms;) especially in dealing with the concernments of others, whose right

1 Tim. 6. 4.

Matt. 9. 4.

Ziba. 2 Sam.

16. 3. & 19.

27.

and repute justice doth oblige us to be wary of infringing, charity should dispose us to regard and tender as our own. It is not every possibility, every seeming, every faint shew or glimmering appearance, which sufficeth to ground bad opinion, or reproachfull discourse concerning our Brother: the matter should be clear, notorious, and palpable, before we admit a disadvantageous conceit into our head, a distastfull resentment into our heart, a harsh word into our mouth about him. Men may fantasie themselves sagacious and shrewd, (persons of deep judgment and fine wit they may be taken for,) when they can dive into others hearts, and sound their intentions; when through thick mists or at remote distances they can descry faults in them; when they collect ill of them by long trains, and subtle fetches of discourse: but in truth they do thereby rather bewray in themselves small love of truth, care of justice, or sense of charity, together with little wisdom and discretion: for Truth is onely seen in a clear light; Justice requireth strict proof; *Charity thinketh no evil*, and *believeth all things* for the best; Wisdom is not forward to pronounce

1 Cor. 13.
5, 7.

nounce before full evidence. (He, saith the Wise-man, *that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*) In fine, they who proceed thus, as it is usual that they speak falsely, as it is casual that they ever speak truly, as they affect to speak ill, true or false; so worthily they are to be reckoned among Slanderers.

6. Another like way of Slandering is, impetuous or negligent sputtering out of words, without minding what truth or consequence there is in them, how they may touch or hurt our Neighbour. To avoid this sin, we must not onely be free from intending mischief, but wary of effecting it; not onely carefull of not wronging one distinct person, but of harming any promiscuously; not onely abstinent from aiming directly, but provident not to hit casually any person with obloquy. For as he that dischargeth shot into a crowd, or so as not to look about regarding who may stand in the way, is no lesse guilty of doing mischief, and bound to make satisfaction to them he woundeth, then if he had aimed at some one person: so if we fling out bad words at random, which may light unluckily, and

defame some-body, we become Slanderrers unawares, and before we think on it. This practice hath not ever all the malice of the worst Slander, but it worketh often the effects thereof, and therefore doth incurr its guilt, and its punishment; especially it being commonly derived from ill temper, or from bad habit, which we are bound to watch over, to curb, and to correct. The Tongue is a sharp and parlous weapon, which we are bound to keep up in the sheath, or never to draw forth but advisedly, and upon just occasion; it must ever be wielded with caution and care: to brandish it wantonly, to lay about with it blindly and furiously, to slash and smite therewith any that happeth to come in our way, doth argue malice, or madnesse.

7. It is an ordinary way of proceeding to calumniate, for men, reflecting upon some bad disposition in themselves, (although resulting from their own particular temper, from their bad principles, or from their ill custome,) to charge it presently upon others; presuming others to be like themselves: like the wicked person in the Psalm,

Psal. 50. 21.

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such

an

an one as thy self. This is to slander Mankind first in the grosse ; then in retail, as occasion serveth, to asperse any man : this is the way of half-witted *Machiavilians*, and of desperate reprobates in wickednesse , who , having prostituted their consciences to vice, for their own defence and solace, would shrowd themselves from blame under the shelter of common pravity and infirmity ; accusing all men of that whereof they know themselves guilty. But surely there can be no greater iniquity then this, that one man should undergo blame for the ill conscience of another.

*Remedium
pœnæ suæ ar-
bitrantur, si
nemo sit sanc-
tus, si omni-
bus detra-
hatur, si tur-
ba sit pereun-
tium, &c.*

*Hier. ad A-
sellam, Ep. 99.*

These seem to be the chief kinds of Slander, and most common ways of practising it. In which description the Folly thereof doth, I suppose, so clearly shine, that no man can look thereon without loathing and despising it, as not onely a very ugly, but a most foolish practice. No man surely can be wise, who will suffer himself to be defiled therewith. But to render its Folly more apparent, we shall display it ; declaring it to be extremely foolish upon several accounts. But the doing this, in regard to your patience, we shall forbear at present.



The Sixth Sermon.

PROV. 10. 18.

He that uttereth Slander is a Fool.

I Have formerly in this place, discoursing upon this Text, explained the Nature of the Sin here condemned, with its several kinds and ways of practising.

II. I shall now proceed to declare the Folly of it ; and to make good by divers reasons the assertion of the Wiseman, that *He who uttereth Slander is a Fool.*

I. Slandering is Foolish, as sinfull and wicked.

All Sin is foolish upon many accounts ; as proceeding from ignorance, error, inconsideratenesse, vanity ; as implying weak judgement, and irrational choice ; as thwarting the dictates
of

of Reason, and best rules of Wisdom; as producing very mischievous effects to our selves, bereaving us of the chief goods, and exposing us to the worst evils. What can be more egregiously absurd, then to dissent in our opinion and discord in our choice from infinite Wisdom; to provoke by our actions sovereign Justice, and immutable Severity; to oppose Almighty Power, and offend immense Goodnesse; to render our selves unlike, and contrary in our doings, our disposition, our state, to absolute Perfection and Felicity? What can be more desperately wild, then to disoblige our best Friend, to forfeit his love and favour, to render him our Enemy, who is our Lord and our Judge, upon whose meer will and disposal all our subsistence, all our welfare does absolutely depend? What greater madness can be conceived, then to deprive our Minds of all true content here, and to separate our Souls from eternal Bliss hereafter; to gall our Consciences now with soar Remorse, and to engage our selves for ever in remediless Miseries? Such Folly doth all Sin include: whence in Scripture-style worthily Goodnesse and Wisdom are terms equivalent;
Sin.

Sin and Folly do signifie the same thing.

If thence this practice be proved extremely sinfull, it will thence sufficiently be demonstrated no less foolish. And that it is extremely sinfull, may easily be shewed. It is the character of the superlatively-wicked man; *Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit: Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.* It is indeed plainly the blackest and most hellish sin that can be; that which giveth the grand Fiend his names, and most expresseth his nature. He is *ὁ Διάβολος*, the Slanderer; Satan, the spitefull Adversary; the old Snake, or Dragon, hissing out lies, and spitting forth venome of calumnious accusation; *the Accuser of the brethren*, a murderous, envious, malicious Calumniatour; *the Father of lies*; the grand defamer of God to Man, of Man to God, of one Man to another. And highly wicked surely must that practice be, whereby we grow Namesakes to him, conspire in proceeding with him, resemble his disposition and nature. It is a complication, a comprisal, a collection and summe of all wickednesse; opposite

Psal. 50.

19, 20.

Apoc. 12. 10.

Joh. 8. 44.

opposite to all the principall Vertues, (to Veracity and Sincerity, to Charity and Justice,) transgressing all the great Commandments, violating immediately and directly all the Duties concerning our Neighbour.

Eph. 4. 25.
1 Pet. 2. 1.

Psal. 31. 5.
& 25. 10.
& 86. 15.
& 89. 14.
& 146. 6.
* Prov. 12.
22. & 6. 17.

To Lie simply is a great fault, being a deviation from that good Rule which prescribeth truth in all our words ; rendering us unlike and disagreeable to God, who is *the God of truth* ; (who * loveth truth, and practiseth it in all his doings, who abominateth falsehood ;) including a treacherous breach of faith toward mankind ; (we being all, in order to the maintenance of society, by an implicit compact, obliged by speech to declare our mind, to inform truly, and not to impose upon our Neighbour ;) arguing pusillanimous timorousnesse, and impotency of mind, a distrust in God's help, and diffidence in all good means to compasse our designs ; begetting deception and error, a foul and ill-favoured brood : Lying, I say, is upon such accounts a sinfull and blameable thing : and of all Lies those certainly are the worst, which proceed from malice, or from vanity, or from both, and which work mischief ; such as Slanders are.

Again,

Again, to bear any hatred or ill-will, to exercise enmity toward any man, to design or procure any mischief to our Neighbour, whom even *Jews* were commanded to *love as themselves*, whose good, by many laws, and upon divers scores, we are obliged to tender as our own, is a hainous fault: and of this apparently the Slanderer is most guilty in the highest degree. For evidently true it is which the Wise-man affirmeth, *A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted with it*; there is no surer argument of extreme hatred; nothing but the height of ill-will can suggest this practice. The Slanderer is an enemy, as the most fierce and outrageous, so the most base and unworthy that can be: he fighteth with the most perillous and most unlawfull weapon, in the most furious and foul way that can be. His weapon is an envenomed *arrow*, *full of deadly poison*, which he shooteth suddenly, and feareth not; a weapon which by no force can be resisted, by no art declined, whose impression is altogether inevitable, and unsustainable. It is a most insidious, most treacherous, and cowardly way of fighting; wherein manifestly the weakest and basest

Levit. 19. 18.

Prov. 26. 28.

Jam. 3. 8.
Psal. 64. 3, 4.
& 57. 4.

basest spirits have extreme advantage, and may easily prevail against the bravest and worthiest: for no man of honour or honesty can in way of resistance or requital deign to use it, but must infallibly without repugnance be born down thereby. By it the vile practiser achieveth the greatest mischief that can be. His words are, as the Psalmist saith of Doeg, *devouring words*, (*Thou lovest all devouring words*, O thou deceitfull tongue:) and, *A man* (saith the Wise-man) *that beareth false witness against his neighbour, is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow*; that is, he is a complicated instrument of all mischiefs: he smiteth and bruiseeth like a *maul*; he cutteth and pierceth like a *sword*; he thus doth hurt near at hand; and at distance he woundeth like a *sharp arrow*, it is hard any-where to evade him, or to get out of his reach. Many (saith another Wise-man, the imitator of Solomon) *have fallen by the edge of the sword: but not so many as have fallen by the tongue*. Well is he that is defended from it, and hath not passed through the venome thereof; who hath not drawn the yoke thereof, nor hath been bound in its bands. For the yoke thereof is as a yoke

Psal. 52. 4.

Prov. 25. 18.
& 12. 6.

*An ungodly
man diggeth
up evil, and
in his lips
there is a
burning fire.*
Prov. 16. 27.

Eccles 28.
18, &c.

yoke of iron, and the bands thereof are bands of brass. The death thereof is an evil death, the grave were better then it. Incurable are the wounds which the Slanderer inflicteth; irreparable the dammages which he causeth, indeleble the marks which he leaveth. *No balsame can heal the biting of a Sycophant;* Adversus Sycophantæ morsum nullum est remedium. no thread can stitch up a good name torn by calumnious defamations; no soap is able to cleanse from the stains aspersed by a foul mouth. *Aliquid adhærebit;* somewhat always of suspicion and ill opinion will stick in the minds of those who have given ear to slander. So extremely opposite is this practice unto the Queen of Vertues, *Charity.* Its property indeed is, to *believe all things,* 1 Cor. 13. 7. that is, all things for the best, and to the advantage of our Neighbour; not so much as to suspect any evil of him, without unavoidably-manifest cause: how much more not to devise any falshood against him? It *covereth* all things, studiously conniving Prov. 17. 9. at real defects, and concealing assured miscarriages: how much more not divulging imaginary or false scandals? It disposeth to seek and further any the least good concerning him: how much

much more will it hinder committing grievous outrage upon his dearest good name ?

Again, all injustice is abominable; to doe any sort of wrong is a hainous crime; that crime, which of all most immediately tendeth to the dissolution of society, and disturbance of humane life; which God therefore doth most loath, and men have reason especially to detest. And of this the Slanderer is

Prov. 19. 28.

most deeply guilty. *A witness of Belial scorneth judgement, and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity, saith the Wise-man.* He is indeed, according to just estimation, guilty of all kinds whatever of injury, breaking all the Second Table of Commands respecting our Neighbour. Most formally and directly he beareth false witness against his neighbour: He doth covet his neighbour's goods; for 'tis constantly out of such an irregular desire, for his own presumed advantage, to dispossess his Neighbour of some good, and transfer it on himself, that the Slanderer uttereth his tale: He is ever a thief and robber of his good name, a deflowerer and defiler of his reputation, an * assassine and murderer of his honour. So doth he violate

* *Dei Episcopos lingua gladio jugulastis, fundentes sanguinem non corporis, sed honoris. Opt. lib. 2.*

Wo be to them who justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. Isa. 5. 23.

violate all the rules of justice, and perpetrateth all sorts of wrong against his Neighbour.

He may indeed perhaps conceive it no great matter that he committeth; because he doth not act in so boisterous and bloudy a way, but onely by words, which are subtle, slimme, and transient things; upon his Neighbour's credit onely, which is no substantial, or visible matter. He draweth (thinks he) no bloud, nor breaketh any bones, nor impresseth any remarkable scar: 'tis onely the soft air he breaketh with his tongue, 'tis onely a slight character that he stampeth on the fancy, 'tis onely an imaginary stain that he daubeth his Neighbour with: therefore he supposeth no great wrong done, and seemeth to himself innocent, or very excusable. But these conceits arise from great inconsiderateness, or mistake; nor can they excuse the Slanderer from grievous injustice. For in dealing with our Neighbour, and meddling with his property, we are not to value things according to our fancy, but according to the price set on them by the owner: we must not reckon that a trifle, which he prizeth as a jewel. Since then all

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men (especially men of honour and honesty) do, from a necessary instinct of nature, estimate their good name beyond any of their goods , yea do commonly hold it more dear and precious then their very lives ; we, by violently or fraudulently bereaving them of it, doe them no lesse wrong, then if we should rob or couzen them of their substance, yea then if we should maim their body, or spill their bloud, or even stop their breath. If they as grievously feel it, and resent it as deeply, as they do any other outrage, the injury is really as great to them. Even the Slanderer's own judgement and conscience might tell him so much: for they who most slight another's fame, are usually very tender of their own, and can with no patience endure that others should touch it: which demonstrates the inconsideratenesse of their judgment, and the iniquity of their practice. It is an injustice not to be corrected or cured. Thefts may be restored , Wounds may be cured ; but there is no restitution or cure of a lost good name : it is therefore an irreparable injury.

Nor

Nor is the thing it self, in true judgment, contemptible; but in it self really very considerable. *A good name, faith Solomon himself, (no fool,) is rather to be chosen then great riches; and loving favour rather then silver and gold.* In its consequences it is much more so; the chief interests of a man, the successe of his affairs, his ability to doe good, (for himself, his friends, his neighbour,) his safety, the best comforts and conveniencies of his life, sometimes his life it self, depending thereon: so that whoever doth snatch or filch it from him, doth not onely according to his opinion, and in morall value, but in reall effect commonly rob, sometime murder, ever exceedingly wrong his Neighbour. It is often the sole reward of a man's Vertue and all the fruit of his industry; so that by depriving him of that, he is robb'd of all his estate, and left stark naked of all, excepting a good Conscience, which is beyond the reach of the world, and which no malice or misfortune can devest him of. Full then of iniquity, full of uncharitableness, full of all wickednesse is this practice; and consequently full it is of Folly. No man, one would think, of

Prov. 22. 1.
& 15. 30.
Eccles 7. 12

Prov. 12. 6.

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any tolerable sense, should dare, or deign to incur the guilt of a practice so vile and base, so indeed diabolical and detestable. But farther more particularly,

2. The Slanderer is plainly a Fool; because he maketh wrong judgments and valuations of things, and accordingly driveth on silly bargains for himself, in result whereof he proveth a great loser. He means by his calumnious stories either to vent some passion boiling in him, or to compass some design which he affects, or to please some humour that he is possessed with: but is any of these things worth purchasing at so dear a rate? can there be any valuable exchange for our honesty? Is it not more advisable to suppress our passion, or to let it evaporate otherwise, then to discharge it in so foul a way? Is it not better to let go a petty interest, then to further it by committing so notorious and hainous a sin; to let an ambitious project sink, then to buoy it up by such base means? Is it not wisdom rather to smother, or curb our humour, then by satisfying it thus to forfeit our innocence? Can any thing in the world be so considerable, that

that for its sake we should defile our Souls by so foul a practice, making shipwreck of a good Conscience, abandoning honour and honesty, incurring all the guilt, and all the punishment due to so enormous a crime? Is it not far more wisdom, contentedly to see our Neighbour to enjoy credit and successe, to flourish and thrive in the world, then by such base courses to sully his reputation, to rifle him of his goods, to supplant or cross him in his affairs? We do really, when we think thus to deposite him, and to climb up to wealth or credit by the ruines of his honour, but debase our selves. Whatever comes of it, (whether he succeeds, or is disappointed therein,) assuredly he that useth such courses will himself be the greatest loser, and deepest sufferer. 'Tis true which the Wise-man saith, *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.* And, *Woe unto them (saith the Prophet) that draw iniquity with cords of vanity; that is, who by falshood endeavour to compass unjust designs.* Prov. 21. 6. Isa. 5. 18.

But it is not, perhaps he will pretend, for to assuage a private passion, or to

promote his particular concernment, that he makes so bold with his Neighbour, or deals so harshly with him; but for the sake of orthodox Doctrine, for advantage of the true Church, for the advancement of publick Good, he judgeth it expedient to asperse him. This indeed is the covert of innumerable Slanders: zeal for some Opinion, or some Party, beareth out men of Sectarian and factious spirits in such practices; they may doe, they may say any thing for those fine ends. What is a little truth, what is any man's reputation in comparison to the carrying on such brave designs? But (to omit that men do usually prevaricate in these cases; that it is not commonly for love of truth, but of themselves, not so much for the benefit of their Sect, but for their own interest, that they calumniate) this plea will no-wise justify such practice. For Truth and Sincerity, Equity and Candour, Meeknesse and Charity are inviolably to be observed, not onely toward dissenters in opinion, but even toward declared enemies of truth it self; we are to *bleſs them*, (that is, to speak well of them, and to wish well to them,) *not to curse them*, (that is,

is, not to reproach them, or to wish them ill, much lesse to bely them.) Truth also, as it cannot ever need, so doth it always loath and scorn the patronage and the succour of lies; it is able to support and protect it self by fair means; it will not be killed upon a pretence of saving it, or thrive by its own ruine. Nor indeed can any party be so much strengthened and underpropt, as it will be weakned and undermined, by such courses: No cause can stand firm upon a bottom so loose and slippery, as falshood is: All the good a Slanderer can doe is, to disparage what he would maintain. In truth, no Heresie can be worse, then that would be which should allow to play the Devil in any case. He that can dispense with himself to slander a Jew or a Turk, doth in so doing render himself worse then either of them by profession are: for even they (and even Pagans themselves) disallow the practice of inhumanity and iniquity. All men by light of nature avow Truth to be honourable, and Faith to be indispensably observed. He doth not understand what it is to be *Christian*, or careth not to practise according there-

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to, who can find in his heart in any case, upon any pretence, to calumniate. In fine, to prostitute our Conscience, or sacrifice our honesty, for any cause, to any interest what-ever, can never be warrantable or wise. Farther,

3. The Slanderer is a Fool, because he useth improper means and preposterous methods of effecting his purposes. As there is no design worth the carrying on by ways of falshood and iniquity ; so is there scarce any (no good or lawfull one at least) which may not more surely, more safely, more cleverly be atchieved by means of truth and justice. Is not always the straight way more short then the oblique and crooked ? is not the plain way more easie then the rough and cragged ? is not the fair way more pleasant and passable then the foul ? Is it not better to walk in paths that are open and allowed, then in those that are shut up and prohibited ; then to clamber over walls, to break through fences, to trespassse upon enclosures ? Surely yes : *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.* Using strict veracity and integrity, candour and equity, is the best method of accomplishing good designs. Our own indu-

Prov. 10. 9.

industry, good use of the parts and faculties God hath given us, embracing fair opportunities, God's blessing and Providence, are sufficient means to rely upon for procuring, in an honest way, what-ever is convenient for us. These are ways approved, and amiable to all men; they procure the best friends, and fewest enemies; they afford to the practiser a chearfull courage, and good hope; they meet with lesse disappointment, and have no regret or shame attending them. He that hath recourse to the other base means, and *maketh lies his refuge*, as he renounceth Iſa. 28. 15, 17. all just and honest means, as he disclaimeth Jer. 28. 15. all hope in God's assistance, and forfeiteth all pretence to his blessing; so he cannot reasonably expect good successe, or be satisfied in any undertaking. The supplanting way indeed seems the most curt and compendious way of bringing about dishonest or dishonourable designs: but as a good design is certainly dishonoured thereby, so is it apt thence to be defeated; it raising up enemies and obstacles, yielding advantages to who-ever is disposed to cross us. As in trade it is notorious, that the best course to thrive is by

by dealing squarely and truly; any fraud or couzenage appearing there doth overthrow a man's credit, and drive away custome from him: so in all other transactions, as he that dealeth justly and fairly will have his affairs proceed roundly, and shall find men ready to comply with him; so he that is observed to practise falshood, will be declined by some, opposed by others, disliked by all; no man scarce willingly will have to doe with him; he is commonly forced to stand out in businesse, as one that plays foul play.

4. Lastly, the Slanderer is a very Fool, as bringing many great inconveniencies, troubles, and mischiefs on himself.

Prov. 18. 7.
& 13. 3.
& 18. 21.

First, *A fool's mouth* (saith the Wise-man) *is his destruction, his lips are the snare of his soul*: and if any kind of speech is destructive and dangerous, then is this certainly most of all; for by no means can a man enflame so fierce anger, impresse so stiff hatred, raise so deadly enmity against himself, and consequently so endanger his safety, ease, and welfare, as by this practice. Men can more easily endure, and sooner will

will forgive, any sort of abuse then this; they will rather pardon a robber of their goods, then a defamer of their good name.

Secondly, Such an one indeed is not onely odious to the person immediately concerned, but generally to all men that observe his practice. Every man presently will be sensible how easily it may be his own case, how liable he may be to be thus abused, in a way against which there is no guard or defence. The Slanderer therefore is apprehended a common enemy, dangerous to all men; and thence rendreth all men averse from him, and ready to crosse him. Love and peace, tranquillity and security can onely be maintained by innocent and true dealing: so the Psalmist hath well taught us; *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

Thirdly, All wise, all noble, all ingenuous and honest persons have an aversion from this practice, and cannot entertain it with any acceptance, or complacence. (*A righteous man hateth lying, saith the Wise-man.*) It is onely

—*ecquid*
Ad te post
pauld ventu-
ra pericula
sentis? Hor.
Ep. 1. 18.
—*Sibi*
quisque timet,
quanquam est
intactus & o-
dit. Idem.

Psal. 34. 12,

13.

Prov. 17. 4.

ly ill-natured and ill-nurtured, unworthy and naughty people, that are willing auditours or encouragers thereof. *A wicked doer* (saith the Wise-man again) *giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.* All love of truth, and regard to justice, and sense of humanity, all generosity and ingenuity, all charity and good will to men, must be extinct in those who can with delight, or indeed with patience, lend an ear, or give any countenance to a Slanderer: and is not he a very Fool, who chuseth to displease the best, onely soothing the worst of men?

Fourthly, The Slanderer indeed doth banish himself from all good conversation and company, or intruding into it becomes very disgustfull thereto: for he worthily is not onely looked upon as an enemy to those whom he slandereth, but to those also upon whom he obtrudeth his calumnious discourse. He not onely wrongeth the former by the injury, but he mocketh the latter by the falshood of his stories; implicitly charging his hearers with weaknesse and credulity, or with injustice and pravity.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, He also derogateth wholly from his own credit, in all matters of discourse. For he that dareth thus to injure his Neighbour, who can trust him in any thing he speaks? what will not he say to please his vile humour, or farther his base interest? what (thinks any man) will he scruple or boggle at, who hath the heart in thus doing wrong and mischief to imitate the Devil? Farther,

Sixthly, This practice is perpetually haunted with most troublesome companions, inward regret, and self-condemnation, fear, and disquiet: * the

conscience of dealing so unworthily doth smite and rack him; he is ever in danger, and thence in fear to be discovered, and requited for it. Of these passions the manner of his behaviour is a manifest indication: for men do seldom vent their slanderous reports openly, and loudly, to the face, or in the ear of those who are concerned in them; but do utter them in a low voice, in dark corners, out of sight and hearing, where they conceit themselves at present safe from being called to an account. || *Swords*

(saith the Psalmist of such persons) *are*

in their lips; for, Who, say they, doth

hear?

* Ο κακός ἐστι πῶν ἐναγώνιοι τοις ἐσθίοις, καὶ δίδοι καὶ μετανοή, καὶ κατεδίει τὸ ἐαυτοῦ γλῶτταν, δίδοι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς, μήποτε εἰς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐνεχθῇ τὸ ῥῆμα μέγα ἐπαγαγῇ τὴν κίνδυνον, καὶ πειθήνῃ χθεον καὶ ἀνένιτον ἐργασίαν τοῖς εἰσιν καὶ. &c.
Chryf.
Ανδρ. γ.
|| Psal. 59. 7.

Pfal. 101. 5. hear? And, Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off, saith David again, intimating the common manner of this practice. Calumny is like the plague, that walketh in darknes. Hence appositely are the practisers thereof termed whisperers, and backbiters: their heart suffers them not openly to avow, their conscience tells them they cannot fairly defend their practice. A gain,

|| Psal. 63. 11. The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

^a Prov. 10. 9.

^b Prov. 12. 19.

(Prov. 26.

26.)

— Refrain

your tongue from backbiting: for there is no word so secret that shall goe for nought; and the mouth that slandereth, slayeth the soul.

Sap. 1. 11.

Et delator

habet quod

dedit exitum.

Vid. Tac.

An. 1. p. 45.

Seventhly, The consequent of this practice is commonly shamefull disgrace, with an obligation to retract, and render satisfaction: for seldome doth Calumny passe long without being detected and || confuted. *a He that walketh uprightly walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways shall be known: and* *b The lip of truth shall be established for ever; but a lying lip is but for a moment,* saith the great observer of things. And when the Slander is disclosed, the Slanderer is obliged to excuse, (that is, to palliate one lie with another, if he can doe it,) or forced to recant, with much disgrace and extreme displeasure to himself: he is also many times constrained, with his losse and pain, to repair the mischief he hath done.

Eighthly,

Eighthly, To this in likelihood the concernments of men, and the powers which guard justice will forcibly bring him : and certainly his Conscience will bind him thereto ; God will indispensably exact it from him. He can never have any sound quiet in his mind, he can never expect pardon from Heaven, without acknowledging his fault, repairing the wrong he hath done, restoring that good name of which he dispossessed his Neighbour : for in this no lesse then in other cases Conscience cannot be satisfied, remission will not be granted, except due restitution be performed : and of all restitutions this surely is the most difficult, most laborious, and most troublesome. 'Tis no-wise so hard to restore goods stolen or extorted, as to recover a good opinion lost, to wipe off aspersions cast on a man's name, to cure a wounded reputation : the most earnest and diligent endeavour can hardly ever effect this, or spread the plaister so far as the soar hath reached. The Slanderer therefore doth engage himself into great streights, incurring an obligation to repair an almost-irreparable mischief.

Ninthly, This practice doth also certainly revenge it self, imposing on its
actour

He that diligently seeketh good, procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him. Prov.

11. 27.

Prov. 26. 27.

It was the punishment of Slanderers in the Law--

Then shall ye doe unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother. Deut. 19. 19. *Prov. 19. 5. A false witnesse shall not be unpunished; and he that telleth lies shall not escape.* Psal. 52. 4, 5. *God shall destroy thee for ever, thou false tongue. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight.* Prov. 12. 22.

actour a perfect retaliation; *a tooth for a tooth*; an irrecoverable infamy to himself, for the infamy he causeth to others. Who will regard his fame, who will be concerned to excuse his faults, who so outrageously abuseth the reputation of others? He suffereth justly, he is payed in his own coin, will any man think, who doth hear him reproached.

Tenthly, In fine, the Slanderer (if he doth not by serious and sore repentance retract his practice) doth banish himself from Heaven and happinesse, doth expose himself to endlesse miseries and sorrows. For, if none that *maketh a lie shall enter into the heavenly city*; if *without* those mansions of joy and blisse every one must eternally abide *that loveth, or maketh a lie*; if * *πᾶσι τοῖς ψευδεσι, to all liars their portion is assigned in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*; then assuredly the capital Liar, the Slanderer, (who lieth most injuriously and mischievously,) shall be

Apoc. 21. 27.

Apoc. 22. 15.

*Apoc. 21. 8.

It is one of those things which God especially doth abominate. Prov. 6.

19. & 12. 22.

A false witnesse shall perish. Prov.

21. 28.

be far excluded from felicity, and thrust down into the depth of that miserable place. If (as S. Paul saith) no railer, or evil-speaker, shall inherit the Kingdom of God; how far thence shall they be removed, who without any truth or justice do speak ill of and reproach their Neighbour? If for every *ἀργὸν ῥῆμα*, idle, or vain, word we must render a strict account; how much more shall we be severely reckoned with for this sort of words, so empty of truth and void of equity; words that are not onely negatively vain, or uselesse, but positively vain, as false, and spoken to bad purpose? If Slander perhaps here may evade detection, or scape deserved punishment; yet infallibly hereafter, at the dreadfull Day, it shall be disclosed, irreversibly condemned, inevitably persecuted with condign reward of utter shame and sorrow.

1 Cor. 6. 10.
& 5. 11.

Matt. 12. 36.

Is not he then, he who, out of malignity, or vanity, to serve any design, or sooth any humour in himself or others, doth by committing this sin involve himself into all these great evils, both here and hereafter, a most desperate and deplorable Fool?

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Having

Having thus described the Nature of this Sin, and declared the Folly therefore, we need, I suppose, to say no more for dissuading it; especially to persons of a generous and honest mind, who cannot but scorn to debase and defile themselves by so mean and vile a practice; or to those who seriously do profess Christianity, that is, the Religion which peculiarly above all others prescribeth constant Truth, strictest Justice, and highest Charity.

I shall onely adde, that since our faculty of speech (wherein we do excell all other creatures) was given us, as in the first place to praise and glorifie our Maker, so in the next to benefit and help our Neighbour; as an instrument of mutual succour and delectation, of friendly commerce and pleasant converse together; for instructing and advising, comforting and chearing one another; it is an unnatural perverting, and an irrational abuse thereof, to employ it to the damage, disgrace, vexation, or wrong in any kind of our brother. Better indeed had we been as Brutes without its use, then we are, if so worse then brutishly we abuse it.

Finally,

Finally, all these things being considered, we may, I think, reasonably conclude it most evidently true, that,
He which uttereth Slander, is a Fool.

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The



The Seventh Sermon.

S. JAMES 4. 11.

Speak not evil of one another, Brethren.

ONe half of our Religion consisteth in Charity toward our Neighbour ; and of that Charity much the greater part seemeth exercised in Speech ; for as speaking doth take up the greatest part of our life, (our quick and active Mind continually venting its Thoughts, and discharging its Passions thereby ; all our conversation and commerce passing through it, it having a large influence upon all our practice) so Speech commonly having our Neighbour and his Concernments for its Objects , it is necessary, that either most of our Charity will be employed

Μὴ καταλαλᾷ-
 τε ἀλλήλων,
 ἀδελφοί.

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ploied therein, or that by it we shall most offend against that great Duty, together with its Associates, Justice and Peace.

And all Offences of this kind (which transgress Charity, violate Justice, or infringe Peace) may perhaps be forbidden in this Apostolical Precept; for the word καταλαλεῖν, according to its origination, and according to some use, doth signifie all kind of Obloquy, and so may comprize slander, harsh censure, reviling, scoffing, and the like kinds of speaking against our Neighbour; but in stricter acceptation, and according to peculiar use, it denoteth that particular sort of Obloquy, which is called *Detraction*, or *Backbiting*: So therefore we may be allowed to understand it here; and accordingly I now mean to describe it, and to dissuade from its practice.

There is between this, and the other chief sorts of Obloquy, (Slander, Censuring, and Reviling) much affinity, yet there is some difference; for Slander involveth an imputation of falsehood; Reviling includeth bitter or foul language, but Detraction may be couched in Truth, and cloathed in fair

fair Language ; it is a Poison often infused in sweet Liquor, and ministred in a Golden Cup. It is of nearer kin to Censuring, and accordingly S. James here coupleth it thereto : *He that detracteth from a Brother, and he that censureth his Brother, backbiteth the Law, and censureth the Law* : yet may these two be distinguished ; for Censuring seemeth to be of more general purport, extending indifferently to all kinds of Persons, Qualities, and Actions, which it unduly taxeth ; but Detraction especially respecteth worthy Persons, good Qualities, and laudable Actions, the reputation of which it aimeth to destroy, or to impair.

This sort of ill practice (so rise in use, so base in its nature, so mischievous in its effects) it shall be my endeavour to describe, that we may know it, and to dissuade, that we may shun it.

It is the fault (opposite to that part of Charity and Goodness, which is called Ingenuity, or Candor) which, out of naughty disposition or design, striveth to disgrace worthy Persons, or to disparage good Actions, looking for blemishes and defects in them, using

The Seventh Sermon.

care and artifice to pervert and misrepresent things to that purpose.

An honest and charitable Mind disposeth us, when we see any Man endued with good Qualities, and pursuing a tenour of good practice, to esteem such a Person, to commend him, to interpret what he doth to the best, not to suspect any ill of him, or to seek any exception against him ; it inclineth us, when we see any Action materially good, to yield it simply due approbation and praise, without searching for, or surmising any defect in the cause or principle, whence it cometh, in the design or end to which it tendeth, in the way or manner of performing it. A good man would be sorry to have any good thing spoiled ; as to find a crack in a fair Building, a flaw in a fine Jewel, a canker in a goodly Flower, is grievous to any indifferent man ; so would it be displeasing to him to observe defects in a worthy Person, or commendable Action ; he therefore will not easily entertain a suspicion of any such, he never will hunt for any. But on the contrary, 'tis the property of a Detractor, when he seeth a worthy Person, (whom he doth not affect,

fect, or whom he is concerned to wrong) to survey him thoroughly, and to sift all his Actions, with intent to detect some failing, or any semblance of a fault, by which he may disparage him; when he vieweth any good Action, he peereth into it, labouring to espy some pretence, to derogate from the commendation apparently belonging to it. This in general is the nature of this Fault. But we may get a fuller understanding of it, by considering more distinctly some particular Acts, wherein it is commonly exercised, or the several paths in which the detracting Spirit treadeth; such are these following:

I. A Detractor is wont to represent Persons and Actions under the most disadvantageous Circumstances he can, setting out those which may cause them to appear odious or despicable, slipping over those which may commend or excuse them. There is no Person so excellent, who is not by his Circumstances forced to omit some things, which would become him to do, if he were able; to perform some things lamely, and otherwise then he would do, if he could reach it; no Action so wor-

Aa 3 thy,

Πολυ τὸ ἔχ
ὑπακῶν. ἐδῶ
δεξιόμενον τὸ
εὖ. Theoph.

thy but may have some defect in matter, or manner, uncapable of redress ; and he that representeth such Person or Action, leaving out those excusing circumstances, doth tend to beget a bad or mean opinion of them, robbing them of their due value, and commendation : thus to charge a man of not having done a good work, when he had not the power, or opportunity to perform it, or is by cross accidents hindred from doing it according to his desire ; to suggest the Action was not done exactly, in the best Season, in the rightest Mode, in the most proper Place, with Expressions, Looks, or Gestures most convenient, these are tricks of a Detractor ; who when he cannot deny the Metal to be good, and the Stamp true, he clippeth it, and so would reject it from being current.

2. He is wont to misconstrue ambiguous Words, or to misinterpret doubtful appearances of Things : Let a man speak never so well, or act never so fairly, yet a Detractor will say his Words may bear this ill Sence, his Actions may tend to that bad Purpose ; we may therefore suspect his meaning, and cannot yield him a full Approbation.

3. He

3. He is wont to misname the qualities of Persons or Things, assigning bad Appellations or Epithets to good or indifferent Qualities: the names of Vertue and Vice do so neerly border in signification, that it is easy to transfer them from one to another, and to give the best Quality a bad Name: Thus, by calling a sober man sowre, a chearful man vain, a conscientious man morose, a devout man superstitious, a free man prodigal, a frugal man sordid, an open man simple, a reserved man crafty, one that standeth upon his Honour and Honesty proud, a kind man ambitiously popular, a modest man sullen, timorous, or stupid, is a very easy way to detract, and no Man thereby can scape being disparaged.

At nos virtutes ipsas invertimus, atq;
Sincera cupimus vos increpare; pro-
bus quis
Nobiscum vivit? multus est
demissus homo; illi
Tardo cognomen pinguis
damus, &c.
Hor. Sat. L. 3.

4. He doth imperfectly characterize Persons, so as studiously to vail, or faintly to disclose their Vertues, and good Qualities, but carefully to expose, and fully to aggravate or amplify any defects or failings in them. The Detractor will pretend to give a character of his Neighbour, but in so doing he stifles what may commend him, and blazoneth what may disgrace him; like an envious Painter he hideth, or

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in dusky Colours shadoweth all the graceful Parts and goodly Features, but setteth out all Blemishes in the briskest Light, and most open view. Every Face hath in it some Mole, Spot or Wrinkle; there is no man, that hath not (as they speak) some blind place; some blemishes in his nature or temper, some faults contracted by education or custom, somewhat amiss proceeding from ignorance, or misapprehension of things; these (although they be in themselves small and inconsiderable, although they are some of them involuntary and thence inculpable, although they be much corrected or restrained by vertuous Discipline, although they are compensated by greater Vertues, yet these) the Detractor snatcheth, mouldeth, and out of them frameth an Idea of his Neighbour, apt to breed hatred, or contempt of him in an unwary Spectator; whereas were Charity, were Equity, were Humanity to draw the Person, it representing his Qualities with just advantage, would render him lovely, and venerable.

5. He is wont not to commend or allow any thing absolutely, and clearly, but always interposing some exception, to which

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The Seventh Sermon.

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which he would have it seem liable: the man indeed, saith he, doth seem to have this, or that laudable quality; the action hath a fair appearance, but then if he can, he blurteth out some spiteful Objection; if he can find nothing colourable to say against it, yet he will seem to know, and to suppress something; but (saith he) I know what I know, I know more than I'll say---- so (adding perhaps a crafty Nod or Shrug, a malicious Sneer or Smile) he thinks to blast the fairest performance.

Non audes repetere, qui tacendo amplius criminaris: & quia non habes quod objicias, simulas vericundiam; ut lector te putet mihi parcere, qui mentiens nectux animæ pepercisti.

Hier. in Ruff. 3, 6.

6. He is ready to suggest ill Causes and Principles (latent in the Heart) of Practices apparently good; ascribing what is well done to bad Disposition, or bad Purpose: So to say of a liberal man, that he is so from an ambitious Temper, or out of a vain-glorious design; of a religious man, that his constant Exercises of Devotion proceed not from a conscientious Love and Fear of God, or out of intention to please God and work out his Salvation, but from Hypocrisy, from affectation to gain the favour and good opinion of men, from design to promote worldly Interests; this is the way of Detraction: He doth well

well (saith the Detractor) it cannot be denied ; but for what reason doth he so ? is it not plainly his Interest to do so ? doth he not mean to get Applause, or Preferment thereby ? *Doth Job serve God for naught ?* so said the Father of detracting Spirits.

Joh. 12.5.

Mat. 26.10,13.

7. He derogateth from good Actions by pretending to correct them, or to shew better that might have been done in their room : it is, saith he, done in some respect well or tolerably ; but it might have been done better, with as small trouble, and cost ; he was over-seen in chusing this way, or proceeding in this manner : Thus did *Judas* blame the good woman, who anointed our Lord's Feet ; *Why (said he) was not this Ointment sold, and given to the Poor ?* so did his covetous baseness prompt him to detract from that performance, of which our Saviour's goodness did pronounce, that it was a *good work*, which should perpetually *through the whole World* pass for *memorable*.

8. A Detractor not regarding the general Course, and constant Tenour of a mans Conversation, which is conspicuously and clearly good, will attaque some part of it, the goodness whereof

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is less discernable, or more subject to contest, and blame ; as if in a Body admirably handsome, one overlooking that curious Harmony, that delicate Complexion, those fine Lineaments, and goodly Features which running through the whole, do conspire to render it a lovely Spectacle, should pitch on an Eye, or a Nose to carp at ; or as if in a Town, otherwhere begirt with impregnable Defences, one should search for the weakest place, to form a Battery against it.

9. In Fine, The Detractor injecteth suggestions of every thing any-wise plausible or possible, that can serve to diminish the worth of a Person, or value of an Action, which he would discountenance ; he pryeth into every Nook, he bolteth every circumstance, he improveth every pretence, he alledgeth any Report or Rumour, he useth all the tricks imaginable to that end. Such is the nature and way of detraction ; in enlarging upon which I am the more sparing, because the Arts and Methods of Detraction being in great part common with those of Slander and Censure, I have otherwhile in treating upon those offences more fully declared them.

Now

The Seventh Sermon.

Now for dissuading from its Practice, I shall propound to your Consideration, the causes whence it proceedeth, the irregularities and pravities which it involveth, the effects which it produceth; the which will appear so base, and ugly, that whoever shall consider them, cannot I suppose but loath the Daughter of such Parents, the subject of such Qualities, and the Mother of such Children.

I.

The causes of Detraction are

1. Ill Nature, and bad Humour: as good Nature, and ingenuous Disposition incline men to observe, like, and commend what appeareth best in our Neighbour; so malignity of Temper and Heart prompteth to espy, and catch at the worst: one, as a Bee, gathereth Honey out of any Herb; the other, as a Spider, sucketh Poison out of the sweetest Flower.

Expedit vobis
neminem vide-
ri bonum, quasi
aliena virtus
exprobratio ve-
strorum deli-
ctorum sit. *Sen.*
de Vit. B. 19.

2. Pride, Ambition, and inordinate Self-Love: the Detractor would engross Praise, and derive all Glory to himself; he would be the chief, the only excellent Person; therefore he would juggle anothers Worth out of the way, that it may not endanger stand-

standing in competition with his, or lessening it by a partnership ; that it may not out-shine his Reputation, or dim it by the lustre thereof.

3. Envy : A Detractor liketh not to see another thrive, and flourish in the good esteem of men, therefore he would gladly blast his Worth, and Vertue ; his *Eye is evil* and sore, therefore would he quench, or cloud the light, that dazleth it.

4. Malicious Revenge and Spite : his Neighbours good Practice condemneth his bad Life ; his Neighbours worth disparageth his unworthiness ; this he conceiveth highly prejudicial to him ; hence in revenge he will labour to vilify the Worth and good Works of his Neighbour.

5. Sense of Weakness, want of Courage, or despondency of his own Ability : He that in any kind deemeth himself able, or confideth in his own Strength, and Industry, will allow to others the commendation befitting their Ability ; for he thinketh himself in capacity to deserve the same, and as he would not lose the Fruits of his own Deserts, so he taketh it for equitable, that another should enjoy them ;

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Οἱ εὐτελεῖς
καὶ ἀφ' ἐαυτῶν
μὴ δυνάμενοι
φαίνεσθαι, ἐκ
τῶ λέγειν τὸς
ἐαυτῶν κρείτ-
τους δείκνυ-
σαι βύλονται.
Socr. Hist.
Eccl. 6. 13.

to deprive another of them, he seeth were in consequence to prejudice his own capacity and hope: but he that feeleth himself destitute of worth, and despaireth to arrive to the credit of others, is thence tempted to disparage and defame such Persons: this course he taketh as the best allay of his contemptibleness, the only solace for his defects that he can hope for; being he cannot arise to anothers pitch, he would bring down that other to his; he cannot directly get any praise, therefore he would indirectly find excuse, by shrouding his unworthiness under the blame of others: Hence Detraction is a sign of the weakest and basest Spirit; 'tis an impotent and groveling Serpent, that lurketh in the Hedg, waiting opportunity to bite the heel of any nobler Creature that passeth by.

Remedium
poenæ suæ arbitrantur si nemo sit sanctus, si omnibus detrahatur, si turba sit perentium, si multitudo peccantium. Hier. ad Ascham. Ep. 99

6. Evil Conscience: A man that is conscious to himself of a solid worth and vertue, of having honest intentions, of having performed good Deeds, is satisfied with the Fruits of inward Comfort, and outward Approbation, which they do yield; he therefore will scorn to seek the bettering himself by the discredit of others; he will not by

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so mean a practice, adulterate that worth, in which he feeleth sufficient complacence ; he rather doth like, that others should enjoy their due commendation, as justifying his own claim thereto ; he willingly payeth it, because he may justly demand it ; and because with-holding it from another, may prejudice his own right thereto : But he that is sensible of no good qualities in himself, that is conscious of no worthy actions that he hath done, to breed a satisfaction of mind, or build a reputation upon, would please himself in making others as little better then himself as he can, would ground a kind of credit upon the ruins and rubbish of another's fame. When he knoweth he cannot shine by his own light, he would seem less obscure by eclipsing the brightness of others, and shutting out the day from about him ; conceiving that all things look alike in the dark, and that bad appeareth not bad where no good is near.

As also a good man liketh Worth and Vertue, because they resemble what he discerneth in himself ; so evil men hate them, because they do not find themselves masters of them ; they are like
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the Fox, who said, The Grapes were sour, because he could not reach them; and that the Hare was dry meat, because he could not catch her. A Detractor therefore is always a bad man, and wanteth those good qualities which he would disparage.

7. Bad selfish Design : Detraction is a common Engine, whereby naughty men strive to compass their ends; when by fair means, by their own Wit, Industry, Courage, worthy Behaviour, they cannot promote their Interests, they cannot drive on their ambitious or covetous Projects, they cannot attain that preferment or that gain which they affect, then they betake themselves to this crooked and foul way of supplanting, by detracting those whom they conceit to stand in the way of their Designs. It was the first piece of wicked policy that ever was practised in the World, the Devil by detracting from the goodness and veracity of God (misrepresenting his Intentions, and misconstruing his Commands) strove to atchieve his mischievous design of seducing our Fore-fathers; and in his foot-steps his serpentine Progeny (the race of malicious, envious, ambitious,

covetous,

covetous, and crafty Politicians) do tread. It is observed to be a Fault that usually haunteth Courts, wherein there is competition for the favour of a Prince, and the consequences thereof, (for Dignity, Power, Wealth, Repute); to get which to themselves, they strive to dispossess, or prevent others by this Instrument of Detraction. It is also rise among Scholars, that is, among Competitors for Wit, Learning, Industry, and the rewards of them, Reputation or Preferment. From such Principles and Causes usually doth this Practice spring.

It doth involve these kinds of irregularity and pravity. II.

I. Injustice. A Detractor careth not how he dealeth with his Neighbour, what wrong he doth him. Justice obligeth to render every man his due; *honour to whom honour is due*, and praise to him that deserveth praise. There can be no greater injury done a man, then to spoil his best good, his Vertue; then to rob him of the best reward of his pains and cares, which is a fair Reputation; (I speak of Rewards which lie in the reach of men). No man

Bb prizes

Prov. 17. 15.

Wo unto them---who take the righteousness of the Righteous from him, Isa. 5. 23.

prizes any thing comparably to his Honesty and Honour ; who therefore by any means blurreth them, is most injurious. *Wo unto them---who take the righteousness of the Righteous from him, Isa. 5. 23.*

Injurious indeed he is not only to the vertuous Person, but to Vertue it self ; for commendation is a debt we owe to it where-ever it is found ; which conduceth to its encouragement and advancement ; and to wrong Goodness it self, is the most heinous injustice.

1 Cor. 13.

2. Uncharitableness : It is evident that the Detractor doth not love his Neighbour ; for Charity maketh the best of every thing : *Charity believeth every thing, hopeth every thing* to the advantage of its Object ; Charity delighteth to see the Beloved to prosper and flourish ; and will therefore contribute its endeavour to the procuring it to do so : the Detractor therefore (who would defile the best, and display the worst in his Neighbour) can have no Charity ; he indeed manifesteth the greatest hatred, seeing he striveth to do the greatest mischief, to cause the greatest vexation to his Neighbour, in bereaving

bereaving him of his most precious and dear enjoyments.

3. Impiety : He that loveth and reverenceth God, will acknowledg and approve his Goodness, in bestowing excellent Gifts and Graces to his Brethren ; when such appear, he will be afraid to disavow, or disgrace them, that he may not rob God himself of the glory thence due to his favour and mercy, or through his Neighbours side wound the Divine Benignity : he will be ready to bless and praise God for all such emanations of his Goodness ; as those did in the *Gospel*, who beholding our *Saviour's* miraculous Works of Grace, did *glorifie God, who had given such works unto men* : but the Detractor careth not for that ; he feareth not to bereave God of the honour of dispensing good Gifts, that his Brother may not have the honour of receiving them ; he will rather deny God to be good, then allow a man to be so by his Grace and Blessing ; so is he no less a Detractor from God, then from his Neighbour.

Hence of all Offences, Detraction certainly must be most odious to God : He is the God of Truth, and therefore

B b 2

detest-

detesteth Lying, of which Detraction ever (especially in moral esteem) hath a spice: He is the God of Justice, and therefore especially doth abhor wronging the best Persons and Actions; he is the God of Love, and therefore cannot but loath this capital violation of Charity; he is jealous of his Glory, and cannot therefore endure it to be abused by flurring his good Gifts and Graces; he cannot but hate that Offence, which approacheth to that most heinous and unpardonable sin, that consisteth in defaming the excellent Works performed by Divine Power and Goodness, ascribing them to bad Causes.

Matt. 12.

4. Detraction involveth degenerate baseness, meanness of spirit, and want of good manners. All men affect to seem generous, and will say, They scorn to be base; but Generosity is in nothing more seen, then in a candid estimation of other mens Vertues and good Qualities; to this generosity of Nature, generosity of Education, generosity of Principles and Judgment do all conspiringly dispose: 'Tis the noblest kind of courtesie, to tender and farther the Reputation of others; to be liberal
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in bestowing commendation on deserving Persons ; it obligeth men more than any other benefit can do, procuring them commonly real advantage, always chearing and satisfying their mind ; for in nothing more do they please themselves, then in reaping this Fruit of their good Intention, and honest Industry, the approbation of worthy men ; it is therefore a most gentile thing thus to oblige men. But on the other side, nothing more plainly argueth a degenerate, and ignoble heart, ill-breeding and ill-formed Manners, a sorry Mind and poor Judgment, then to disesteem or disparage Worth and Vertue in others : 'Tis the most savage rudeness, the most sordid illiberality, the most ugly clownishness that can be ; of all men therefore it most doth misbecome those who pretend to be Gentlemen.

5. In consequence to these things, Detraction includeth Folly ; for every unjust, every uncharitable, every impious, every base Person is (as such) a Fool ; none of those qualities are consistent with Wisdom ; but the folly of it will particularly appear (together

ther with its pravity) by the bad and hurtful effects, which it produceth, both in regard to others, and to him that practiseth it; some of which are these:

III.

I. The practice thereof is a great discouragement, and obstruction to the common practice of Goodness: for many seeing the best Men thus disparaged, and the best Actions vilified, are disheartned and deterr'd from practising Vertue, especially in a conspicuous and eminent degree: Why, will many a man say, Shall I be strictly good, seeing Goodness is so liable to be misused, seeing thereby I shall provoke the detracting Tongue, seeing my Reward shall be to have a severe inquisition pass upon me, to have my Life defaced, and my Name bespattered? Had not I better be contented with a mediocrity, and obscurity of goodness, then by a glaring lustre thereof to draw the envious eye, and kindle raging Obloquy upon me? Thus men of a weaker spirit, or a bashful temper (who are not stiff and resolute in their way, who have not the heart or the face to bear up against

gainst rude assaults of their Reputation) will be scared and daunted by Detraction; so as consequently to be induced,

---*placare invidiam virtute relictâ.* Hor.

And when thus the credit of Vertue is blasted in its Practisers, many will be diverted from it; so will it grow out of request, and the World will be corrupted by these Agents of the *Evil One*.

It were indeed, upon this consideration, advisable and just, not to seem ever to detract; even not then when we are well assured that by speaking ill, we shall not really do it; if we should discover any Man to seem worthy, or to be so reputed, whom yet we discern (by standing in a nearer light) not to be truly such, having had opportunity to know his bad qualities, bad purposes, or bad deeds; yet Wisdom would commonly dictate, and Goodness dispose not to marr his repute: If we should observe (without danger of mistake) any plausible Action to be performed out of bad Inclinations, Principles, or Designs;

Bb 4

yet

yet ordinarily in discretion and honesty we should let it pass with such commendation as its appearance may procure, rather than to slur it, by venting our disadvantageous apprehensions about it: for it is no great harm that any man should enjoy undeserved commendation, or that a counterfeit worth should find a dissembled respect; it is but being over-just, which if it be ever a fault, can hardly be so in this case, wherein we do not expend any cost, or suffer any damage; but it may do mischief to blemish an appearance of Vertue; it may be a wrong thereto to deface its very Image; the very disclosing Hypocrisy doth inflict a wound on Goodness, and exposeth it to scandal; for bad men thence will be prone to infer, that all Vertue proceedeth from the like bad Principles: so the disgrace cast on that which is spurious, will redound to the prejudice of that which is most genuine: And if it be good to forbear detracting from that worth which is certainly false, much more is it so in regard to that which is possibly true; and far more still is it so in respect to that which is clear and sure.

2. Hence

2. Hence Detraction is very noxious and baneful to all Society ; for all Society is maintained in welfare by encouragement of honesty and industry ; the which, when disparagement is cast upon them, will be in danger to languish and decay ; whence a Detractor is the worst Member that can be of a Society ; he is a very Moth, a very Canker therein.

3. Detraction worketh real damage, and mischief to our Neighbour ; it bereaveth him of that goodly Reputation which is the proper reward of Vertue, and a main support to the practice of it ; it often really obstructeth and disappointeth his Undertakings, estranging those from him, or setting them against him, who do credulously entertain it.

4. The Detractor abuseth those, into whose ears he instilleth his poisonous suggestions, engaging them to partake in the injuries done to Worth and Vertue ; causing them to entertain unjust and uncharitable conceits, to practise unseemly and unworthy behaviour toward good men.

5. The Detractor produceth great inconveniences and mischiefs to himself.

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He raiseth against himself fierce animosity, and wrath : for Men, that are conscious to themselves of their own honest meaning, and blameless proceedings, cannot endure to be abused by unjust disparagement ; hence are they stirred to boil with passion, and to discharge revenge upon the Detractor.

He exposeth himself to general hatred ; all good men loath him as a base and mischievous Person, and a particular Enemy of theirs, always ready to wrong them ; every man is apt to say, He that doth thus abuse another, will be ready to serve me in like manner, if I chance to come in his way, vilifying the best thing I can do ; even the worst men will dislike him ; for even such affect to do somewhat laudable or plausible, and would be glad to enjoy approbation for it ; and cannot therefore brook those who lie in wait to rob them of the Fruit of their good endeavours ; so do all men worthily detest and shun the Detractor, as a common Enemy to Goodness first, and then unto Men. Farther ;

6. The Detractor yieldeth occasion to others, and a kind of right to return the same measure upon him. If he hath

hath in him a shew of any thing laudable, men will not allow him any commendation from it : for why, conceive they, shall he receive that which he will not suffer others to enjoy ? How can any Man admit him to have any real worth or vertue in himself, who doth not like it, or treat it well in another ? Hence, if a Detractor hath any good in him, he much injureth himself, depriving himself of all the respect belonging thereto.

7. Again, the Detractor (esteeming things according to moral possibility) will assuredly be defeated in his aims ; his detraction in the close will avail nothing, but to bring trouble and shame upon himself ; for God hath a particular care over Innocence and Goodness, so as not to let them finally to suffer ; the *good mans Righteousness he will bring forth as the light, and his Judgment as the noon day* : Wise men easily will discern the foul play, and will scorn it ; Good men ever will be ready to clear and vindicate the Truth ; Worth however clouded for a time, will break through all Mists, and gloriously expand it self, to the confusion of its most fly opposers.

Psal. 37. 6.

Such

Such are the natural and obvious effects of this practice ; the consideration whereof (together with the causes producing it, and the essential adjuncts which it doth involve) will, I should think, suffice to deter us from it.

I shall only adjoin one Consideration, which our Text suggesteth: *Speak not evil of one another, Brethren*, saith the Apostle: *Brethren*; That Appellation doth imply a strong Argument enforcing the Precept: Brethren, with especial tenderness of affection, should love one another, and delight in each others good ; they should tender the interest and honour of each other as their own ; they should therefore by all means cherish and countenance Virtue in one another, as that which promoteth the common Welfare, which adorneth and illustrateth the dignity of their Family. We should rejoice in the good qualities and worthy deeds of any Christian, as glorifying our common Father, as gracing our common Profession, as edifying the common Body, whereof we are Members ; *Members we are one of another*, and as such should find complacence in the health and vigor of any part, from whence the

the whole doth receive benefit and comfort : for one Brother to repine at the Welfare, to malign the Prosperity, to decry the Merit, to destroy the Reputation of another, is very unnatural ; for one Christian any-wise to wrong or prejudice another, is highly impious.

To conclude ; It is our duty (which Equity, which Ingenuity, which Charity, which Piety do all concurrently oblige us to) when-ever we do see any good Person, or worthy Deed, to yeeld hearty esteem, to pay due respect, gladly to congratulate the Person, and willingly to commend the Work ; rendering withal, thanks and praise for them to the *Donor of all good Gifts* : unto whom, for all the good things bestowed upon us, and upon all his Creatures, be for ever all glory and praise.
Amen.

The



The Eighth Sermon.

S. MATTH. 7. 1.

Judg not.

THese Words (being part of our Saviours most Divine Sermon upon the Mount) contain a very short Precept, but of vast use, and consequence ; the observance whereof would much conduce to the good of the World, and to the private quiet of each man ; it interdicting a Practice, which commonly produceth very mischievous and troublesome Effects ; a Practice never rare among men, but now very rife ; when with the general causes, which ever did and ever will in some measure dispose men thereto, some special ones do concur, that powerfully incline to it.

There

There are innate to men an unjust Pride, emboldning them to take upon them beyond what belongeth to them, or doth become them; an excessive Self-love, prompting them as to flatter themselves in their own conceit, so to undervalue others, and from vilifying their Neighbours, to seek commendation to themselves; an envious malignity, which ever lusteth to be pampered with finding or making faults; many corrupt Affections, springing from fleshly Nature, which draw or drive men to this Practice; so that in all Ages it hath been very common, and never any profession hath been so much invaded, as that of the Jurg.

But divers peculiar Causes have such an influence upon our Age, as more strongly to sway men thereto: there is a wonderful affectation to seem hugely wise and witty; and how can we seem such more, then in putting on the garb and countenance of Judges; scanning, and passing Sentence upon all Persons, and all things incident? there is an extreme niceness and delicacy of conceit, which maketh us apt to relish few things, and to distast any thing; there are dissensions in opinion, and addicted-
ness

ness to parties, which do tempt us, and seem to authorize us in condemning all that differ from us; there is a deep corruption of mind and manners, which engageth men in their own defence to censure others, diverting the blame from home, and shrowding their own under the covert of other mens faults; there are new principles of Morality, and Policy, become current with great vogue, which allow to do or say any thing subservient to our Interests, or Designs; which also do represent all men so bad, that (admitting them true) nothing hardly can be said ill of any man beyond Truth and Justice.

Hence is the World become so extremely critical and censorious, that in many places the chief employment of men, and the main body of conversation is, if we mark it, taken up in judging: Every gossiping is, as it were, a Court of Justice; every seat becometh a Tribunal; at every Table standeth a Bar, whereto all men are cited, whereat every man (as it happeneth) is arraigned, and sentenced: No sublimity or sacredness of Dignity, no integrity or innocence of Life, no prudence or circumspection of Demeanour can ex-

Expedit vobis
neminem vide-
ri bonum; quasi
aliena virtus
exprobratio ve-
strorum deli-
ctorum sit. Sen.
de Vit. B. 19.

Ἐἰς τὰ τῶν
ἄλλων πολυ-
πραγμονεῖν καὶ
καταδικάζειν
δοκῶνται
ἡμῖν ἅπας ὁ-
ρίσθαι καὶ ἐδύνα-
σθαι εὖ εἶπε τα-
χέως, ὃ βιωπι-
κὸν ἀνδρῶν, ὃ
μοναχὸν ταύ-
της ἐλευθερίαν
τῆς ἀμαρτίας,
καίτοιγε το-
σούτης ἀπειλῆς
καίμενης αὐτῇ.
Chryl. ad den.
T. 6. Orat. 42.

Cc

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The Eighth Sermon.

empt any Person from it; Not one escapeth being taxed under some scandalous Name, or odious Character, one or other. Not only the outward Actions and visible Practices of men are judged; but their retired sentiments are brought under trial, their inward dispositions have a verdict past on them, their final states are determined. Whole Bodies of men are thus judged at once, and nothing it is in one breath to damn whole Churches, at one push to throw down whole Nations into the bottomless Pit. All mankind in a lump is severely censured, as void of any real goodness, or true vertue; so fatally depraved as not to be corrigible by any good discipline, not to be recoverable even by the grace of God: yea God himself is hardly spared, his Providence coming under the bold obloquy of those, who (as the *Psalmist* speaketh of some in his time, whose race doth yet survive) *Psalm. 73. 8, 9. speak loftily, and set their Mouth against the Heavens.*

This being too apparently the present state of things, and obvious practice of men, it were desirable, that in order to their being reclaimed, men commonly did well understand the nature

ture of this practice with the heinous guilt, and consequently the deadly hazard they do incur thereby : at this purpose my discourse shall aim, wherein I shall endeavour both to describe the nature of the practice forbidden in my Text, and to declare the pravity, iniquity, and folly of it.

Judge not. As to the word we may observe, that it being in it self according to its primitive sense of a middle and indifferent signification, is yet frequently in the Scripture used in the worst sense ; so as to import those acts, or those effects of judgment, which pass to the disadvantage of the Persons subjected thereto ; for condemnation, and for infliction of punishment : And this sense here surely the word doth principally respect, yet not so precisely as to exclude somewhat contained in the larger sense : We are so prohibited the condemning, and punishing our Neighbour in his good name, that withal some acts antecedent, or concomitant to those, are glanced at in the prohibition : undue application thereto, unjust proceeding therein are also signified unlawful ; for the meaning of the word, and the reason of the

case may be so far extended.

But for the fuller and clearer understanding of the matter, we must observe, that there are divers sorts of Judging, or acts resembling Judgment, which do not belong to this precept ; which it is requisite to distinguish from this Judging prohibited.

1. That exercising publick Judgment, or administering Justice is not here prohibited, I need not to insist, that is necessary ; Humane Society could not subsist, Right could not be maintained, nor Peace preserved without it ; God thereby governeth the World, earthly Judges being his Instruments and Substitutes ; such Judgment is not so much the act of men, as of God himself, by whose Authority, in whose Name, for whose Service it is ministred. As *Moses* told the Judges in his time, *You shall not be afraid of the Face of Man, for the Judgment is God's.* And in numberless places of Scripture this Judgment is allowed, and authorized ; it therefore is not touched here.

Deut. 1. 17.

2. That Trial and Censure (although out of Court, and without formal process) which any kind of Superiors do exercise upon their Inferiors, committed to
to

to their inspection and care ; such as of Parents over Children, Masters over Servants, Pastors over their Flock, any Governours over their Charge, their Admonitions, Reprehensions, and Corrections are to be excepted hence, as being in themselves needful, and warranted, yea enjoyed by God.

3. Neither are fraternal correction or friendly reproof (proceeding out of charitable design, upon clear ground, in fit season, within reasonable compass) concerned in this prohibition ; this being a wholesome practice, and a duty incumbent on us : *Thou shalt* (saith the Law) *not hate thy Brother in thine heart ; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.* Lev. 19. 17.
1 Thess. 5. 14.

4. All observing, and reflecting upon our Neighbours Actions, all framing an opinion about them, and expressing our Minds concerning them are not forbidden. For we are not bound perpetually to shut our Eyes, or go about hood-winked ; nor to stop our Ears and make our selves deaf : And how can we forbear to think according to plain evidence ? how can we resist the impressions of sense upon our Minds ?

how can we contest notorious experience? How also barring such apprehensions of obvious and apparent things, could we bear testimony concerning them? how could we signifie our approbation or dislike of them? how could we for his amendment admonish or reprove our Neighbour, as in some cases we are obliged to do?

5. We are not hence obliged to think so well of all men, as without competent knowledg always to rely upon their pretences, or to intrust our interests in their hands; for common experience acquainteth us that we may be deceived in trusting men, Prudence biddeth us in matters of importance not to confide in uncertainties; wherefore we shall not be culpable for being wary in such cases: this indeed is not a positive Judgment, but only a waving to declare in favour, when sufficient ground of doing so doth not appear; it is only a reasonable suspecting the possibility of miscarriage in some Persons, not a downright asserting ill concerning any one man; wherefore to do it as it suiteth discretion, so it doth not thwart Justice or Charity; and cannot therefore be prohibited here.

6. We

6. We are also not hence obliged, in contradiction to plain sense, to judge well of men; accounting him for a Saint, or a good man, whom we see living disorderly, or committing scandalous offences; plainly repugnant to the rules of Piety, Justice, or Sobriety.

In fine, There are some special cases, and circumstances, wherein good men excusably may in severe terms declare their resentment of manifest wickedness, especially such as is prejudicial to God's Honour, and publick good. Of this there are divers instances, which yet hardly can be reduced to common rules, or proposed for general example; the matter being ticklish, and men being apt to pervert any liberty or pretence of this kind, by indulging to their own bad humours and passions.

These sorts of allowable Judgments being excepted, it is then private, affected, needless, groundless, rash and harsh censuring the persons or actions of our Brethren; such as doth resemble not the acting of a lawful Superior, of a needful Witness, of a faithful Friend, but of a Judge, acting without competent right, upon no good grounds, or in undue manner, which is here interdicted: the

word *Judging* doth well imply the nature of this Fault, the manner of our proceeding therein, the grounds of its unlawfulness; neither perhaps can we better understand our duty in this matter, then by expending what are the Properties and Obligations of a Judge, and comparing our practice thereto; for thence it may plainly appear how unqualified we are to bear this Office, and how unduly we execute it.

I. No Judge should intrude himself into the Office, or assume a Judicial Power without competent Authority; that is, by delegation from Superior Powers, or by voluntary reference of the Parties concerned. This Condition we fail in, when-ever without warrant from God, or special reason exacting it from us, we do pry into, scan, and tax the Actions of our Neighbour. When, I say, we are pragmatically inquisitive into the Purposes and Proceedings of our Superiors, of our Equals, of those who are not subject to our Charge and Care, when we narrowly examine them: When we peremptorily blame them, then do we unduly exalt our selves above them, and exercise an unwarrantable jurisdiction over

¶ Per. 4. 15.

¶ Thess. 4. 11.

Prov. 27. 16.

¶ Tim. 5. 13.

The Eighth Sermon.

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over them. What Sense doth offer, we may receive in; what Judgment Reason doth extort, we may follow; what Testimony publick Benefit requireth, we may yield; what Expression Charity doth call for toward our Neighbour's edification, we may seasonably vent: but if we proceed further in this way, the Party concerned may appeal from us as incompetent and unlawful Judges of his actions, or his state; we are arrogant and injurious in presuming to exercise that Office. God is the Master and Judge of Men, and without Authority from him, we must not presume to judge his Servants and Subjects: So we are taught by *S. Paul*; *Who* (saith he) *art thou that judgest another man's Servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth*: and *S. James* in like manner upon the same ground expostulateth with the Censurer; *There is* (saith he) *one Law-giver, who is able to save, or to destroy*; *Who art thou that judgest another?* Our Lord himself for this reason declined intermeddling in the affairs of Men; *Who* (saith he) *made me a Judge, or Divider over you?* And shall we constitute ourselves in the Office, shall we seat our
selves

Quid in potestate alienam irrui? quid temerarius Dei Tribunal ascendis? Opt. lib. 2.

Rom. 14. 4.

Jam. 4. 11.

Luke 12. 14.

selves on the Tribunal, without any Commission from God, or Call from Men? How many Judges, if this *proviso* were observed, would have their *quietus*? how many Censures would be voided hence?

Levit. 19. 15.

2. A Judg should be free from all Prejudices, and all partial Affections; especially from those which are disadvantageous to the Party in danger to suffer; such as tempt or incline to condemn him; from ill-opinion, and ill-will, from anger, envy, revengefulness, contempt, and the like: for he that is possessed with these, is no wise qualified to be a Judg; his eyes are blinded, or distorted, or infected with bad tinctures, so that he cannot discern what is right, or that he seeth things represented in the wrong place, and under false colours: His Mind is discomposed and disturbed, so that he cannot calmly and steadily apprehend or consider the just state of the Case; his Will is biaised, and strongly propendeth one way, so that he cannot proceed uprightly in a streight and even course: Being not indifferently affected, but concerned on one side, he is become a Party, or an Adversary, and

thence

Jam. 2. 1.
Matth. 22. 16.
1 Tim. 5. 21.

thence unfit to be a Judg ; He hath determined the Cause with himself beforehand, so that no place is left to further discussion or defence; wherefore before such a Judg the best Cause will fall, the clearest Innocence shall not preserve from condemnation. He therefore that will undertake this Office, must first devest himself of all Prejudices, must rid himself of all Passions, must purify himself from all corrupt Inclinations, taking care not to come with a condemning Mind, or a lust to punish the obnoxious Party ; otherwise a just Exception lieth against him, and reasonably his Jurisdiction may be declined.

If this Rule were put in practice, there would be little censuring ; for few come to it with a free and pure Mind ; few blame their Neighbours without some preoccupation of Judgment, or some disaffection toward them.

3. A Judg should never proceed in Judgment, without careful examination of the Cause, so as well to understand it. Even those, who out of indispensable Duty, or by a just Power may call others to accompt, are yet obliged

Deut. 1. 16.

liged to be wary, and never to pass Sentence without due cognizance of the Cause ; otherwise they will judge blindly and rashly ; they will either decide wrongly, or so truly, that doing it must be imputed not to their Vertue, but to their Fortune ; often they will be mistaken, and 'tis luck that they are not so always ; and what plainer Iniquity can there be, then that the Reputation or real Interest of any Man should be put to the arbitrement of Chance ; that he should be defamed, or damnified, not for a certain Fault, but from an unhappy Lot ? As things viewed at a distance appear much different in bigness, shape, and colour from what they are in nature and reality ; so if we do not look nearly and narrowly, we shall greatly misapprehend the nature, the degrees, the right characters of things, and of persons ; then be our pretence to judge never so fair, yet our proceeding is unjust ; then if we do unduly invade the place, it will be a great aggravation of our misdemeanour : If of our own head and pleasure, we will constitute our selves Judges, yet at least we should act the Judges part, in patiently attending to,
and

and heedfully sifting the Cause : If we have not a stomach to hear, if we will not afford the care to mind what may be alledged in favour of the Party concerned ; if we cannot, or will not scan every Point and Circumstance, which may serve to acquit him, or to excuse and extenuate his Guilt, why do we undertake to be his Judges? Why do we engage our selves into the Commission of so palpable injustice ? yea, of so disgraceful folly : for, *He* Prov. 18. 13. *that answereth a Matter before he heareth it, it is (saith the wise Man) a folly, and shame unto him.* This Caution excludeth rash Judgment, from which if Men would abstain, there would be little censuring : for nothing is more ordinary, then for men to do like those of whom S. Jude saith, *οσα εν οιδασι, ελασφημυσι*, *they rail at what they know* Jud. 10. *not* ; they censure Persons with whom they are not thoroughly acquainted, they condemn Actions, whereof they do not clearly ken the Reasons ; they little weigh the Causes and Circumstances which urge or force men to do things ; they stand at great distance, and yet with great assurance and peremptoriness determine how things are, as if they

they did see through them, and knew them most exactly.

4. A Judg should never pronounce final Sentence, but *ex allegatis & probatis*, upon good grounds, after certain Proof, and upon full Conviction. Not any slight Conjecture, or thin Surmise; any idle Report, or weak Pretence is sufficient to ground a Condemnation upon; the Case should be irrefragably clear and sure before we

John 7. 24.
— μὴ πρὸς ὅρασιν
τὰς ψυχὰς ἐκ-
φύγειν, πρὶν αὖ
ἐν αἰσὶ ἀπο-
δείξει γένην-
ται. Chrys. in
Gen. Hom. 42

Quod probari
non potest, mi-
hi infectum est.
Bern.

De occultis
cordis alieni
temerè judica-
re iniquum est,
& cum cujus
non videntur
opera nisi bo-
na, peccatum
est ex suspicio-
ne reprehende-
re. Joh. 3. 1.
Ep. 1.

determine on the worse side: *Judg not* (saith our Lord) *according to the appearance, but judg righteous Judgment.* The Jews seeing our Lord cure an infirm Person upon the Sabbath Day, presently upon that semblance condemned him of violating the Law; not considering either the sence of the Law, or the nature of his performance; and this he termeth unrighteous Judgment. Every Accusation should be deemed null, until both as to matter of fact, and in point of right, it be firmly proved true; it sufficeth not to presume it may be so; to say, It seemeth thus, doth not sound like the Voice of a Judg; otherwise seeing there never is wanting some colour of Accusation, every Action being liable to some sus-
picion,

spicion, or sinister construction, no Innocence could be secure, no Person could escape condemnation; the Reputation and Interest of all men living would continually stand exposed to inevitable danger. It is a Rule of Equity and Humanity, built upon plain Reason, that rather a Nocent Person should be permitted to escape, than an Innocent should be constrained to suffer: for the impunity of the one is but an inconvenience, the suffering of the other is a wrong; the punishment of the Guilty, yieldeth only a remote probable benefit; the affliction of the Blameless, involveth a near certain mischief: wherefore it is more prudent and more righteous to absolve a Man, of whose guilt there are probable Arguments, then to condemn any Man upon bare suspicions. And remarkable it is how God in the Law did prescribe the manner of Trial and Judgment, even in the highest Case, and most nearly touching himself, that of *Idolatry*; *If* (saith the Law, *Deut. 17. 4.*) *it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and behold it be true, and the thing certain, that such an abomination is wrought in Israel; then shalt*

shalt thou bring forth that man, or that woman, and shalt stone them : See what great Caution is prescribed, what pregnant Evidence is required in such Cases; it is not enough that it be reported, or come to our ear; diligent inquiry must be made, it must be found true, it must appear certain, before we may proceed to condemn, or execute ; it is indeed not fair judgment, but meer calumny to condemn a man, before he doth by sufficient proof appear guilty.

If this Rule were regarded, how many Censures would be prevented? For do not men catch at any shadow of a Fault? are they not ready upon the least presumption to condemn their Neighbour? Doth not any, even the weakest & vaineſt testimony, any wandering hear-say, or vulgar rumour serve to ground the most heavy Sentences?

5. From hence is plainly consequent, that there are divers Causes wholly exempted from our Judgment, and which in no case we must pretend to meddle with ; such as are the secret thoughts, affections, and purposes of men, not expressed by plain words, nor declared by overt acts ; for a capacity of judging, doth ever suppose a power of cognizance;

nizance ; and it being impossible for us to reach the knowledg of those things, we cannot therefore pretend to judg of them. As it is the property of God to search the Hearts, and try the Reins, so it is his Prerogative to judg concerning the secret motions in them ; the which we attempting to do, no less vainly and foolishly, then presumptuously and profanely do encroach upon.

This Point also being regarded, would prevent innumerable rash Judgments ; for men commonly do no less dive into the thoughts, and reprehend the inward dispositions and designs of their Neighbour, then they do his most apparent and avowed Actions ; 'tis almost as ordinary to blame men for the invisible workings of their Mind, as for their most visible deportment in Conversation.

6. Hence also it is not commonly allowable to judg concerning the state (either present or final) of our Neighbour in regard to God ; so as to take him for a wicked man, or to denounce Reprobation upon him : for the state of men is not so much determined by single Actions, as by a body of Pra-

Πολλὰ δὲ
ἐξαρκῶσαι, καὶ
παθεῖν, πρὶν
ἄλλως κατα-
γνώνας δύνασ-
θαι. Greg.
Naz. Orat. 26.

D d

ctice,

Pfal. 139. 6.

1 Sam. 16. 7.

Isa. 11. 3.

Pfal. 139. 2, 3.

Prov. 16. 2.

1 Sam. 2. 3.

Pfal. 103. 14.

Job 14. 16.

ctice, or by a long course and tenour of Life, compounded and complicated of Actions in number and kind unconceivably various, it dependeth not only upon external visible Behaviour, but upon the practice of close Retirements, and occult motions of Soul; upon the results of natural Temper, upon the influence of fortuitous Circumstances; upon many things indiscernible, inscrutable, and unaccomptable to us; the which God alone can perceive, and estimate thoroughly: *God seeth not* (as he did himself tell Samuel) *as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God locketh on the heart: He searcheth our hearts, and understandeth our thoughts afar off: He compasseth our path, and is acquainted with all our ways: He weigheth our spirits; he knoweth our frame; he numbreth our steps; he scanneth our Designs, and poiseth all our Circumstances exactly; he doth penetrate, and consider many things transcending our reach, upon which the true worth of Persons, and real merit of Actions do depend; he therefore only can well judg of mens state. As a specious out-side doth often cover inward hollowness and foulness, so*
under

under an unpromising appearance much solidity and sincerity of Goodness may lodg ; a dirty ground doth often contain good Seeds within it ; our judgment therefore in such Cases is likely (at least in degree) to be fallacious and unjust ; and therefore it is fit to supersede it, according to the advice and discourse of S. Paul ; *He that judgeth me is the Lord ; Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come ; who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart ; and then shall every man have praise* (that is a right estimate of his Person and Deeds) *from God.* 1 Cor. 4. 51

If this were duly considered, many hard thoughts, and many harsh words would be spared ; Men would not be so apt to damn those, whom they have no skill to try.

7. Farther ; A Judg should not undertake to proceed against any man, without warning and citing him to appear, or without affording him competent liberty and opportunity to defend and justifie himself. Judgment should not be administred clancularly, in dark Corners, but in open Court ;

not suspiciously, in a muttering or whispering way ; but frankly, with a clear and audible voice ; not upon surprize, but with allowance of leisure and advice, that the Party may be able to apprehend his Case, and manage his Plea, for his best defence : for it may justly be presumed, that as he is most concerned, so he is best acquainted with his own Proceedings, and may allege Reasons for them, which no man can so well perceive as himself ; it is therefore fit that he should be heard, before he is condemned, that he may not suffer wrong ; at least that he may be convinced that he doth not, and that our proceeding may be cleared from misprision ; that also the World may be satisfied of Justice being done ; and that likewise false Accusers may be liable to due shame and chastisement. The manner of proceeding used by the Romans, and reported by *Festus* in S. Paul's Case, was full of reason and equity : *It is not* (said that Governor) *the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he, which is accused, have the Accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself, concerning the Crime laid against him :* Other-

Acts 25. 16.

The Eighth Sermon.

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Otherwise indeed any Innocence may easily be oppressed irrecoverably, without any defence, and consequently without any means of evasion or redress. We should never yield both ears to the Accuser, but reserve one for the Accused. The end of Justice, we may consider, is not to condemn nor to work mischief to any one, but rather, so far as may be, to acquit and prevent evil to all ; at least it aimeth to clear the Truth, and state the Case indifferently ; wherefore 'tis just, that all advantage that well can be, should be afforded to the obnoxious Party for his justification and deliverance ; at least that he be not denied equal advantage with his Prosecutors ; Humanity would allow him some favour ; the most rigorous Justice cannot refuse him leave to contest his Cause upon equal terms : wherefore 'tis fit that he should be acquainted with his Case, that competent time and means should be afforded him to prepare for his Defence, that his Plea should receive, if not a favourable, yet a free audience : the contrary practice is indeed rather backbiting, whispering, supplanting, or sycophantry, then fair and lawful judging.

Dd 3

The

Ἐπὶ τὴν ἐννό-
μωσ διὰ τὴν
τὰς τοῦ κατὰ
προσέμενον δα-
τέρας τὰν ἀ-
νομίαν ἀνεγείαν
φωλᾶσαι, &c.
Theod. Ep. 91.

God himself
(as some of the
Fathers ob-
serve) hath
shewed us an
Example of
this Equity,
descendam igi-
tur & videbo,
Ec. Gen. 18. 21.
Καίτοι σαφῶς
ἵδεται ὅτι ἀν-
θρώπων ἐνεί-
κων τὴν πειν-
ρίαν. Ἀλλ' ὁ-
μῶς ἐφ' ἡμετέ-
ρας ὁμαφοί, δι-
δάσκων ἡμᾶς
ἀναμένειν ὅτι
πραγμάτων
τὴν πέρας.
Theod. Ep. 119
& P. Pelagius
ad Eliam.

The observation of this Rule would also cut off many Censures ; for seldom it is that our Censurers do charge men to their faces, but rather take all possible care, that what they say may never come to the ears of those whom they accuse ; they fear nothing more than being confronted, and detected ; they decline the shame and the requital due to their sycophantick practice ; which is a manifest Argument of their foul dealing ; and they no less in reality do thence condemn themselves, then they would seem to condemn others.

8. Moreover, a Judg is obliged to conform all his Determinations to the settled Rules of Judgment, so as never to condemn any man for acting that, which is enjoined, or approved, or permitted by them ; he must not pronounce according to his private fancy, or particular affection, but according to the standing Laws ; which as they are the only certain Rules of Moral Action, the only Grounds of Obligation, the only Standards of Guilt and Innocence, so in reason they should be the sole Measures of Judging ; he that proceedeth otherwise, is an arbitrary and a slippery Judg ; he encroacheth
upon

The Eighth Sermon.

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upon the Right and Liberty of those with whom he medleth, pronouncing them Guilty, whom God and Reason do proclaim blameless. This is that which *S. Paul* doth reprove in the 14th Rom. 14.
1 Cor. 8. 8.
Col. 2. 16. to the *Romans*, and other-where; the Case was this; Some were of opinion, that abstaining from some kinds of Meat, and observing some Festival Times, were matters of Duty required by God; others thought it free to eat any thing, and to use any times alike: these, according to such their private opinions, did censure the practices of each other; one Party condemned the other as transgressing Duty, the other contemned them as weak in Judgment; but the Apostle reproveth both as irregular in their Behaviour, in taxing one another for Matters which on both hands were indifferent; the Divine Law having clearly neither enjoined those observances, nor prohibited them; so that each man had a liberty to do, or to abstain, as he thought good, or most agreeable to his Duty, and conducive to his Salvation: So is it culpable in us to blame any man for doing that which is not repugnant to God's express Command, or to the

Dd 4 plain

plain Dictates of Reason.

The observing this Condition, would smother many Censures: For do we not commonly reprehend our Neighbours for practices wholly blameless, perhaps commendable? Do we not sometimes grievously reproach them for not complying with our Desires, for not serving our Interests, for not jumping with our Humours, for not dancing after our Pipe; for dissenting from us in any Conceit, although dubious or false; for discosting from our practice, although bad or inconvenient? Say we not ordinarily, he is morose, peevish, singular, rude, because he will not *run with us into the same excess of Riot*; he is weak, nice, superstitious, because he constantly and strictly adhereth to his Duty; he is negligent, loose, profane, because he useth his liberty in some matters indifferent? Bar such matters of obloquy, into how narrow a compass would it be restrained?

9. Hence farther it is to be supposed, that a Judge should be a Person of good Knowledge and Ability; well versed and skilful in the Laws concerning Matters under debate; endued with good measure of Reason, enabling him

ἕκαστος κρίνει
καλῶς ἀγνοῶν
καὶ τὰ πρῶτα
ἐστὶν ἀγαθὸς
κρίτης. Arist.
Eth. 1. 3.

as
16

as to sift and canvas Matters of Fact, so to compare them accurately with the Rules of Right ; for nothing is more absurd then an Ignorant, and unskilful Judg. Men therefore of weak Capacity, of mean Education, of small Experience, are qualified to judg in few Cases, most things being placed above their reach ; such never should presume to censure Actions, the worth or moral quality whereof, depend upon the stating and resolution of abstruse, intricate, or subtile Questions : It is not therefore for Mechanicks or Rusticks to judg about Difficulties of Science, about Controversies in Religion, about Mysteries of Policy, or Reasons of State ; or to censure those who deal in them ; in so doing, they hugely trespass beyond their Calling and Sphere ; they do strangely misbecome the Bench, and will very untowardly misbehave themselves thereon ; the decision of such Matters is to be reserved to those, who by study and experience have attained peculiar Faculties to do it respectively.

Observing this Point, would draw many down from their usurped Seats of Judicature, and stop numberless vain
Ser-

Sentences; we should have very few Judges left, if all men would be so modest and so wise, as not to meddle beyond their skill and ability.

Sine dubio in
omnibus statim
accusationibus
hoc agendum
est, ne ad eas
libenter de-
scendisse vide-
amur. *Quintil.*
II. I.

10. Again; It is proper for a Judge not to make himself an Accuser; not to seek for Misdemeanours; not to draw more Causes under his cognizance; then are in course presented before him: He should rather judge as out of constraint, then of choice; rather as sorry to find a Necessity, then glad to snatch an occasion of condemning Offenders. So should we rather decline, then seek the Office of censuring our Brethren, rather conniving at, and concealing their Faults, then being forward to expose them; absolute Reason only should induce, or indispensable Necessity force us thereto.

This also greatly would diminish the Trade of Censuring; for if we should never censure without great Reason or necessity, how seldom should we do it? Do we not rather affect to do it causlessly and needlessly? do we not eagerly search after, and greedily embrace all occasions to do it? Is it not a pleasant entertainment to us, to be carping

carping and cavelling at any Body we meet, at any thing we see done ? Farther,

11. He that pretendeth to judg others, should himself be innocent ; under no Indictment, and not liable to Condemnation : Is it not very improper for a Criminal, for one who is not only in Truth, and in his own Conscience guilty, but who standeth actually

Cum ipse sis reus, in alterum audes ferre sententiam ?
Opt. 2.

convicted of heinous Offences, to sit upon the Bench, determining about the Deeds and the States of others ?

It is the case of us all, we are all notoriously guilty of heinous Crimes before God, we all do lie under the Sentence

Psal. 143. 2.

of his Law ; we do all stand in need of Pardon from our Judg, his Mercy is our only Hope and Refuge ; and shall we then pretend to be Judges, or be

passing Sentence on our Brethren ? If only those, who are free and guiltless, should judg, who could undertake it ?

there would surely be no more, then there appeared then, when in the Case of the Woman taken in Adultery, our

Lord propounded the like condition ; 'ο ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν, He that is without

Joh. 8. 7, 9.

sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her : upon which Proposition the

Sequel

Sequel was ; *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own Conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even to the last ; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst ;* so infallibly should no man be allowed to judg, who were not himself void of like Guilt, would every man escape censure.

12. Lastly ; It is the property of a good Judg to proceed with great moderation, equity, candor, and mildness ; as a general Friend, a Friend to Justice, to the Publick, to Mankind, to the Party impeached : As a Friend to Justice, he should be careful that the Defendant receive no wrong in his Credit, or Interest ; as a lover of the Publick, he should wish that no Offences or Scandals be found ; out of humanity he should desire, that no man may incur the blemish of guilt, or pain of suffering ; he should tender the Parties Case as compassionate, and desire that he may be delivered from the evil threatning him ; this should render him willing to acquit, and free the Party, apt to apprehend and interpret all things favourably, ready to excuse and mollifie the business
what

what he can ; far from picking faults out of obscure surmises, or slender pretences, from aggravating the miscarriages that are detected, from stretching the blame farther then it will reach of it self, or making the case worse then it needs must be, from pronouncing a harsh or heavy sentence thereon. He should always be of Counsel to the Defendant, pleading his Cause so far as truth and equity will permit ; putting himself in his Case, and thence no wise dealing with him more rigorously, then he, according to impartial judgment, should in the like case deem it equal that himself should be dealt with : in fine, however the Matter in the result appear to stand, he should avoid rigour and extremity, he should exercise clemency and mercy.

If this course were observed, innumerable Causes, which now are severely judged, would never be mentioned, or come under trial, but would presently be cast out ; many would soon, after small discussion, be voided ; few would pass that extremity of censure, which now by the cruel asperity of men, they are forced to undergo : For do we not accuse men for things, that are
no

no Faults ; do we not exaggerate the guilt of petty Faults ? do we not insult over great miscarriages with too unmerciful severity ? as if they were incorrigible and unpardonable.

Seeing then few of us, according to those reasonable qualifications and conditions, are capable of being Judges ; seeing, if those equal Rules were observed, most Censures would be discarded ; seeing hard it is for any man either warrantably to undertake, or uprightly to discharge this Office ; great reason there is for this Precept, most fit it is that we should be forbidden to judg.

So much for the part explicative, and directive ; now for the persuasive, and for inducing us to eschew this practice, let us briefly declare the pravity and vanity of it ; the performing which, will I suppose, be sufficient to dissuade and deter us from it. Be pleased only first to note, that some Considerations which we shall propound, will be applicable to some kind of bad censure, some to another, according to the several defects and incapacities we have to judg lawfully, upon the grounds already touched.

I. Cen-

1. Censuring is an impious practice in regard to God.

By taking upon our selves to judge unduly, without Authority, or beyond it, we do invade God's Office, setting up our selves as Judges in his room; we usurp his Right, exercising Jurisdiction over his Subjects, without order and license from him: 'tis S. Paul's Argument, *Who art thou that judgest ano-* Rom. 14. 4.
thers Servant? that is, how intollera-
bly bold and arrogant, how sacrilegi-
ously injurious and profane art thou,
to climb up into God's Tribunal, and
thence to pronounce doom upon his
Subjects?

By rash judgment in matters not sub-
ject to our cognizance, (as when we
pronounce concerning the secret
thoughts and intentions of men) we
proudly and perversly do arrogate to
our selves the incommunicable Perfe-
ctions of God, who alone can know
such things, and determine rightly in
such cases; who therefore hath reserved
them to himself, commanding us *to* 1 Cor. 4. 5:
judg nothing before the time, until the
Lord come.

By passing Sentence about the state
of our Neighbour, we do anticipate
God's

God's Judgment, and by prejudging strive to frustrate it. We take upon us to *purge his Floor*; to sever the Chaff from the Corn, and the Tares from the Wheat, to discriminate the Goats from the Sheep; which to perform, will be the Work of God's Infinite Wisdom and Justice at *the great day*.

Matt. 3. 12, 13.
& 25. 32.

Quantus arrogantiae tumor est, quanta humilitatis ac lenitatis oblivio, arrogantiae suae

quanta jactatio, at quis aut facere se posse credat, quod nec Apostolis concessit Dominus, ut zizania à frumento putet se posse discernere, aut quasi ipsi paleam auferre, & aream purgare concessum sit, paleas conetur à tritico separare? *Cypr. Ep. 52.*

Jam. 4. 11.

By censuring our Brethren causlessly, for not complying with our conceits; humours, or practices, we lay hold upon, and appropriate to our selves God's Legislative Power; we subject his Law to our fancy and pleasure; we in effect condemn his Law of Error and Imperfection; we do at least make our selves sharers with him in the enacting Laws, and dispensing Justice: *He* (saith S. James) *that speaketh against his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh against the Law, and judgeth the Law*; that is, he opprobriously doth imply the Law to be defective, until he doth compleat or correct it; making it a guilt not to satisfy his Will or Conceit, beside the plain intent of the

the Law ; the dispensation of Justice is not sufficient, unless he partake therein, taxing whom and why he pleaseth ; God without him is not a perfect Law-giver, or Judg.

We are also very ingrateful in not being favourable towards our Brethren in Judgment ; when as God is in his Judgment so benign, patient, and merciful toward us ; who *is not extreme to mark what we do amiss* ; is not forward to seek or find faults, but rather *waiteth to be gracious, hideth his face from our sins* ; and *passeth by our transgressions* ; doth not aggravate our offences, but rather doth excuse them, *remembering that we are flesh* ; is not glad of occasion to punish, but *delighteth in mercy* ; and *doth not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men* ; is not severe, but *punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve* ; and *in his wrath remembereth mercy*. And are we not impious, if we do so ill requite him, and so little resemble him, in being rigorous and harsh toward our Brethren, when they offend ; or seem to do so ?

In fine ; Censuring is impious, as involving the violation of those great Commandments, of exercising (in all
E e out

Psal. 130. 3.

Isa. 30. 18.

Psal. 51. 9.

Mic. 7. 18.

Psal. 78. 39.

Ex. 103. 14.

Mic. 7. 18.

Lam. 3. 33.

Ezr. 9. 13.

Hab. 3. 2.

our demeanour and dealing) Humility, Meekness, Pity, and Mercy toward our Brethren; of pursuing and promoting peace among them.

2. Censuring, in respect to our Neighbour, is an unjust practice. It is unjust to meddle in Affairs, with which we have nothing to do; to draw those Persons under our Jurisdiction, who are not subject to it, but are liable to render their Accompt at another Bar; to punish those in their reputation or interest, over whom we have no just Authority, *who have their own Master, to whom they must stand or fall.*

'Tis most unjust to judg any man without competent means of knowing, or skill to determine his Case; to condemn him without diligent trial, without certain proof, without full conviction of his Fault; to punish him without just cause, or beyond due measure.

'Tis very unjust to usurp an interest in the Goods, which are to our Neighbour most proper and dear; his Credit and Concernments depend thereon; disposing of them as we please, to his disadvantage and prejudice.

'Tis

'Tis also very unjust, when as we do need the candid Judgment, the forbearance, and pardon of others for many things faulty and offensive that we commit, to refuse the like to others.

3. Censuring is also a very uncharitable practice, and so contrary to the principal Duty of our Religion; it is so eminently in all cases wherein it is unjust, (for Charity doth virtually contain Justice, and transcendeth it) it is so peculiarly when-ever it is harsh or rigorous, when it is affected; when it is needless or unprofitable; for Charity disposeth us to be gentle, meek, patient, and merciful in all our dealings; it engages us to hide and smother, to diminish and excuse, to pass by and pardon Offences; *Charity seeketh no evil, it covereth all things, it beareth all things*; it tendreth our Neighbour's good, and advantage of all kinds, (his credit, his interest, his convenience, and pleasure) it therefore will inflict no more evil, then reason and necessity shall indispensably require.

A Censurer is indeed unjust and uncharitable, not only toward those

Ec 2

whom

--æquum est
Peccatis veni-
am poscentem
reddere rursus.
Hor. Sermon. I. 3.
Det ille veni-
am facile, cui
venia est opus.
Sen. Tr.

1 Cor. 13. 5, 7.
ὅπως ἔχω ἐν
τοῖς ἀμφοτέ-
ροις. νέμειν
χρῆμα πρὸς
τὸ φιλεῖν ὅ-
σον, καὶ ὁποῖ-
ον ἂν ἴδω-
μεν. ἢ καὶ ἴ-
δωμεν ὅτι ὁ
πατὴρ. *Naz.*
Or. 21.

whom he censureth, but also toward those into whom thereby he doth infuse ill-opinion, and ill-will toward their Neighbour; he is guilty of their injustice and uncharitableness, a mischief more irreparable then his own.

Est proprium
stultitiæ alio-
rum vitia cer-
nere, oblivisci
suum. Cic.
Tusc. 1.

4. Censuring is a very foolish and vain practice in manifold respects; as arguing great ignorance and inconsiderateness, as producing grievous inconveniencies and mischiefs, especially to the practiser of it.

Jam. 3. 2.

It signifieth, that we do not well understand, or not well consider the natural impotency and frailty of mankind; how liable others are to mistake, and slip; and how prone we our selves are thereto; how (as S. James saith) *in many things we offend all*; Did we observe, or would weigh this; we should not be so forward to censure, or so vehement and bitter in it; we should see failing and tripping in many things to be a common case, rather demanding commiseration then censure.

It implieth also, that we little consider, how our escaping any Faults, which our neighbour slippeth into, is no wise imputable to any worth or virtue in us, so much as the good Providence,

dence, and merciful Grace of God, guarding or rescuing us from them ; if we did apprehend and reflect on this, it would appear our Duty rather to bless God for our being protected from miscarriages, then censoriously to insult over those who seem to fall into them. It signifieth we have no sight or sense of our own defects ; for did we clearly see, did we humbly resent them, that would damp our heat and earnestness to censure. It declares a fond self-conceit, that we deem our selves superior to our Neighbour in Wisdom, and less obnoxious to blame, and therefore fit to be his Judges ; whereas according to a sober esteem of our selves, we should appear more fit to stand at the Bar, then to sit upon the Bench ; and should thence more dread the one, then affect the other.

It sheweth likewise, that we do not rightly conceive the nature, or worthily esteem the consequences of this practice : We know not, or regard not, the value of our Neighbour's Reputation, which by censure we do mean to ruin, or impair : We perhaps by no means would rob him of his Substance, or of his Life ; yet we scruple not by

E c 3

grievous

grievous censure to bereave him of his good Name ; which he, the best prizer of his own Goods, may esteem beyond his Estate, or his Life it self ; we think it nothing, or a slight matter to carp at him, but he feeleth it very painful, and deeply resenteth it.

It argueth in us an untamed fierceness of mind, and discomposedness of passion, which can never consist or cohabit with Wisdom ; for a well-ordered, calm, and free mind, will be slow in conceiving offence or dislike, moderate in estimating things, reserved in expressing its sentiments, not easily transported into extremity or excess ; it consequently hardly will suffer a Man to break forth into rash or harsh censure. So many Signs and Arguments of incogitancy and blindness this Practice doth involve.

5. Furthermore, this practice will produce many great inconveniencies and mischiefs to us.

1. We do thereby provoke, and in a sort authorize others to requite us in the same kind : for nothing more doth excite the indignation, doth enflame the anger, doth engender the hatred of men

Prov. 12. 16.
*A fools wrath
is presently
known ; but a
prudent man
covereth
shame.*

Prov. 29. 11.
*A fool utter-
eth all his
mind ; but a
wise man
keepeth it till
afterwards.*

at tibi coram
Exhib. inqui-
rant vixia ut
in a rursus, &
illi. Her. Sermon
L. 3.
L. 4.

men toward us, then being pragmatical in finding fault, and hasty to censure their doings, cauſeſſy or immoderately; nothing ſeeming to them a more certain Argument that we bear them ill-will, or do contemn them; and if we ſo vex them, they will in requital be as ready by finding or making faults in us, to vex and trouble us; it engageth their care, and quickneth their induſtry, and whetteth their invention to obſerve, or deviſe matter of recrimination. Men think it not only lawful, but even needful for them, in their own defence, to diſparage the Cenſurer, that his judgment may have the leſs weight to their prejudice: So that it will inſalliby come upon us, as our Lord warneth (uſing it as an Argument to diſſuade us from this practice) that, *with what judgment we judge, we ſhall be judged; and with what meaſure we mete, it ſhall be meaſured to us again*: Men take it for allowable to retaliate in this way to the height, and ſtoutly to load the cenſorious man with censure.

2. We do by this practice, not only expoſe our ſelves to censure, but implicitly, and according to ready confe-

Ee 4

quence,

Matt. 7. 2.
Luk. 6. 37, 38.

Vid. Chryſ. in
Matt. Or. 36.
p. 249.

quence do pass it upon our selves; seeing we seldom, in kind or equivalently, are our selves clear of that which we charge upon others; with our own weapon of sharp censure, we through another's side do imprudently wound our selves; and often, as *David* did in his Parley with *Nathan*, adjudg our selves to capital punishment; so that to any censorious Person, it may be said, in *S. Paul's* words, *Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self; for thou that judgest, dost the same things.*

3 Sam. 12.

Rom. 2. 1.

3. We do by censuring others, aggra-

ὁ πικρῶς τὰ
ἀλλότρια ἐξε-
τάζων ἐν τοῖς
κατ' ἐαυτὸν
πλημμελήμα-
σιν ὁδευμᾶς
ἀπολαμβάνεται
συγγνώμης πο-
τε. Chrys.
ἐν δ. γ.
Rom. 2. 1, 3.

vate our own faults, and deprive them of excuse, and render our selves incapable of Mercy and Pardon: for of all men, he that is forward and prone to censure, who is rigorous and severe in judging others, deserveth no favour; nor can reasonably pretend thereto. *Inexcusable* (saith *S. Paul*) *art thou, O man; whosoever thou art, that judgest; for, thinkest thou this, O Man, that judgest them which do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the Judgment of God?* and, *Μὴ γενάζετε κατ'*

ἀνθρώπων
οἱ πλείστοι
βραδεῖς μὲν
εἰσιν ἑᾷ ἰδίαν
καὶ ταῖς ἑαυ-
τῶν ἁμαρ-
τίαις ἐξετάσαι
Ναζ. Or. 26. ἔγωγε ἢ ἑτέροις ἁμαρτανόμων
καὶ ἑαυτοῖς δικασαί, τὰς ἑαυτοῦ δοκῶς παρορῶμεν. Chrys. ad
Deimet. Tom. 6. Or. 52.

ἀλλήλων.

ἀλλήλων. Do not (saith S. James) ^{Jam. 5. 9.} ^{2. 13.} *moanfully complain one against another, lest you be condemned; and, He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy, in his judgment, saith the same Apostle. Which passages imply, that to be unmerciful in this kind, will expose us to the severity of Judgment in regard to our offences; or, that if we deal harshly with our Brethren now, God will then proceed the more severely toward us, when our great Cause doth come under trial.*

ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆ φύσεως ἡμῶν πε-
πλημμελημέ-
νων ἡμῶν μὴ-
νον, ἀλλὰ καὶ
ἀπὸ τῆ κρίσε-
ως τῆ σῆς περὶ
ἐτέρων οἷσι
τῶν ψῆφον ὁ
Θεός. Chrys.
Ibid.

Ὡς περὶ γὰρ ὁ φιλάνθρωπος καὶ ἡμερῶν, καὶ συγκυμονικὸς ὑποτέμνε-
ται τῇ πλείονα ἢ ἡ ἀμαρτημάτων ὄγκον; ἔτις ὁ πικρὸς καὶ ἡμῶς καὶ
ἀπαράκλητος πάλυ τοῖς οἰκείοις ἀμαρτήμασι προσέδῃσι μέγιστος.
Ibid.

4. Indeed censuring others is an Argument, that we do little mind our own case, or consider to what a dreadful Judgment we do stand obnoxious: did we think of that, we should see cause rather to employ our leisure and care in stating our own Accompts, then in examining those of others; more adviseable it would appear to mind our own case, then to busy our selves in canvassing and determining the state of our Neighbour; finding what great need our Actions will have in

that

Rom. 14. 10.

Τὰ ἡμέτερα
ἐξετάζομεν.
καὶ ἑαλένα ἐρε-
μεν κακῶς.
Chryf. in

2 Tim. Orat. 2.

that day of favourable construction, and merciful allowance, we should become candid and mild in reflecting upon the actions of others; we should not be forward to carp at any thing, we should scarce have the heart to condemn any man; this S. Paul seemeth to imply, when he thus argueth: *Why dost thou judg thy Brother, or why dost thou set at naught thy Brother? We shall all stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ;* that is, Why do any of us judge others, seeing we must all be judged our selves? It is not seemly, it is not expedient for those, who soon must be arraigned, and put to answer for themselves, to be busy in questioning and prejudging others; but rather to spend their care and pains in preparing for their own Accompt.

ὃ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀν-
θρώπων κατὰ
σοφίαν. καὶ τὸς
ἀλλοτρίους πο-
λυτεταχμένον-
τα βίους τῆς ἰδίας

ἐπιμεληθῶναι ποτε ζωῆς. Τῆς γὰρ σωδῆς ἀπάσης αὐτῶν εἰς τὴν ἐτέ-
ραν πλυπραγμοσύνην ἀναλίσκομένης, ἀνάγκη τὰ αὐτῶν πάντα
ἀπλῶς κείσθαι καὶ ἡμελημένως. Chryf. ἀνδρ. γ.

from

from blame (for that carefully reflecting upon their own infirmities and defects, spending their heat and activity of spirit upon amending their own Errors and Faults, they have less time, less concernment, less mind to search out and scan the imperfections and misdemeanours of others; they do find less reason also, and therefore have less will to be fierce or severe toward them) so the most censorious are usually the most stupid in discerning, and most careless in retrenching their own faults. And needs it must be so, for the Actions of other men devour their leisure, take up the intention of their spirits, employ the keenness of their passions upon them, so that they cannot, and will not attend to themselves; they are so much abroad, they are so very busy elsewhere, that they little know, or care what is done at home; while they are spying and pulling out *Motes from their Brothers eye*, they consider not the *Beam that is in their own eye*, although never so gross and obvious.

6. Hence, I say, it is that commonly the best men are the most candid and gentle, and they are most apt to blame others, who deserve worse themselves;

that

Vid. Chryf.
Tom. 2. Or. 42.

Sen. de Vit.
B. 27.

Βεβλῶ εἰς ὑ-
πόνοιαν κακῶ
τὸ πρὸς κακίαν
διυσκίνητον.
Naz. Orat. 8.

Mat 7. 3, 4.
Τὸ κακίας ἐ-
λεύθερον, καὶ ὑ-
ποεσθῆναι κακί-
αν ἀφλότερον.
Naz. Ep. 27.

Ὁ μὲν γὰρ κακὸς
πάχιστα ἀνὰ χι-
τῶν καὶ τῶ ἀ-
γαθὸς, ὁ ἀγαθὸς
ᾧ ἐστὶ τὸ κακῶ
σαδῖως. Naz.
Orat. 21.

Ego mi igno-
co, Mænius in-
quit; Stultus &
improbis hic
amor est, dig-
nūsq; notari.
Hor. Sermon. l. 3.

that the sharpest tongues, and foulest lives do usually go together; that they who are the strictest Judges of their own, are the fairest Interpreters of other mens actions; and they who will least pardon others, do most excuse themselves; that they who are strangely acute in descrying other mens Faults, are stark blind in discerning their own. Our *Saviour* therefore chargeth such Persons with Hypocrisie, (*Thou Hypocrite; first cast the Beam out of thine own eye*) implying, that they do but falsely pretend a respect for goodness and zeal against Sin, seeing in their own practice they indulge it; that it is indeed rather pride, peevishness, idleness, spleen, or selfish design that acteth them.

7. In fine; The censorious humour, as it argueth ill-nature to be predominant, (a vulturous nature, which easily smelleth out, and hastily flieth toward, and greedily feedeth on Carrion) as it signifieth bad Conscience; for he that knoweth evil of himself, is most prone to suspect, and most quick to pronounce ill concerning others; so it breedeth and fostereth such ill dispositions; it debaucheth the minds of men, rendring them dim, and doltish in

in apprehending their own Faults, negligent and heedless in regard to their own hearts and ways; apt to please and comfort themselves in the evils, real or imaginary, of their Neighbours; which to do, is a very barbarous and brutish practice.

These Considerations may, I hope, suffice to persuade the observance of this Precept, by the help of God's Grace, to which I commend you, and conclude.

Now the God of Peace---make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The



The Ninth Sermon.

1 THESS. 4. 11.

*And that ye study to be quiet, and to
do your own Business.* Chrys. in
2 Cor. Orat. 19

AS frequently between neighbouring States there do rise Dissentions and Contests about the just limits of their Territories; so doth it frequently happen between Vertue and Vice, Right and Wrong, Duty and Miscarriage in Practice: for although the extream Degrees, and even the middle Regions of these things are very distant, yet the Borders of them do lie very close together, and are in a manner contiguous; a certain ridg of separation running between them, which commonly (being very narrow, thin, and obscure) it is not
easy

easy to discern. So it particularly falleth out in the matter before us, where in our Text is concerned: Duty and Offence do neerly confine, and almost indiscernibly differ one from the other; for there are about this Case Precepts which seem to contradict; there are Duties appearing to thwart one another.

Rom. 12. 11.

Phil. 2. 4.

S. Paul here biddeth us to be studious, or ambitious of quiet; otherwhere he enjoineth us to be earnestly active, (to be *σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί*, *not slothful in business*); Here he would have us to mind our own Affairs; otherwhere he prescribeth, that we should *not look every man to his own things, but every man also to the things of others.*

According to the general drift of Scripture, and the tenour of our Religion, we are in charity obliged to concern our selves heartily for the good of our Neighbour, and to strive earnestly in promoting it; we are enjoined so far to interpose and meddle in the Affairs of others, as to watch over them for their good; to instruct and advise them, to admonish and excite them, to check and reprove them upon

upon occasion; to offer and yield them succour, to compose Differences between them; to promote their Edification and Peace; *Let us* (saith the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*) *consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works*: *Let us* (saith *S. Paul* to the *Romans*) *follow after the things which make for peace, and things where- with one may edifie another*; and, *exhort your selves together, and edifie one another*; *warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak*, saith he to the *Thessalonians* in this *Epistle*.

Κατανοήσαν
ἀλλήλους.
Heb. 10. 24.

Rom. 14. 19.
& 15. 2.

1 Theff. 5.
11, 14.

To be zealous and earnest in the maintenance and propagation of Truth, of Vertue, of Piety, is a Duty incumbent on us, which implieth care and activity concerning others; that we offer to instruct them; that we enter in to contest with them; that we examine their words and actions; that we presume to tax and oppose them.

Tit. 11. 11.

In fine; Our Religion doth seem, by the bands of mutual Relation, and obligations of Charity so to unite us together, so to endear us to one another, and to all men; that all things belonging to our Brethren do nearly

F f

touch

touch us, and should answerably affect us; so that by intermeddling with any thing relating to their welfare, we can hardly be said to meddle with what doth not concern us.

The condition of things also may seem to require, that we so intermeddle; for the Duties and Affairs of Men are so entangled or interwoven, that we can hardly prosecute any Concernments of our own, without being engaged in the Matters of others: In discharging all Offices of Society, in pursuance of any Traffick or Commerce, in all intercourse and conversation, while we transact our own Business, we cannot avoid the furthering, or obstructing the Business of others, who are engaged in the same, or contrary Designs: Society doth subsist by combinations of Care and Pain, regarding common Interests, so that it seemeth impossible so to mind our own Business, as not to meddle with the Business of others.

Yet notwithstanding *S. Paul* injoineth us so to affect Quiet, as simply to mind our own Business, or not to be meddlesome in the concernments of others; for that *doing our own Business,*

ness, is meant exclusively to meddling with the Affairs of others is plain enough, by the importance of *τὸ ἰδίαν*, which is emphatical, and signifieth only our own, or our proper Business; and because it is joined with *being quiet*, which respecteth others, and importeth not stirring beyond our own bounds; to be so meddlesome, being also a practice expressly condemned by S. Peter, in that prohibition, *But let* 1 Pet. 4. 16. *none of you suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as a Malefactor, or as a busybody in other mens matters*; where Pragmaticalness is we see not only forbidden, but is coupled with the most heinous Offences.

How then shall we reconcile these things? how shall we in the case sever between the bounds of Duty and Blame? It is indeed somewhat difficult to do it precisely, and with distinctions which shall reach all cases: But somewhat I shall endeavour toward it, by propounding some Rules and Directions, which should commonly be observed in our dealing and intercourse with others; but first let us a little reflect upon the terms in which the Precept is couched.

F f 2

Study

Study to be quiet : *Study* ; the word is φιλοτιμείσθαι, which signifieth to be ambitious, that is, to affect quiet with the like vehemency of desire and care, as men are wont to pursue Reputation, Dignity, and Power, the Objects of Ambition : the expression containeth a remarkable emphasis, or a grave *acumen* ; for whereas Ambition commonly doth prompt men to be restlessly busy, and engageth them in the Concernments proper to others, S. *Paul* biddeth them to be ambitious the contrary way, in affecting quiet, and abstinence from other Affairs beside their own.

To be quiet ; This doth signifie not a Physical, but a Moral Rest ; not a total forbearance of Action ; not a fastidious or drowsy listlessness to do any thing ; not a senseless indifferency concerning the Matters of others ; not an absolute sequestering our selves from common Affairs ; this is not quiet, or tranquillity, the τὸ ἡσυχάζειν here, but a naughty sloth, stupidity, or savageness ; the Quiet here meant is opposed to disorderly motion, to turbulency, to contention, to pragmatistical curiosity, to all such exorbitant behaviour, whereby

whereby the Right of others is infringed, their Peace disturbed, their just Interest or Welfare any-wise prejudiced: This Quiet is a calm, steady, regular way of proceeding, within the bounds and measures prescribed by Reason, Justice, and Charity, Modesty, and Sobriety; such a motion as the Heavenly Bodies do keep, which so move that they seem ever to stand still, and never disturb one another; in fine, what a Quiet is meant, the subsequent words, and the context do shew; it followeth.

And πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια, *to do our own Business*, or to act things proper and pertinent to us; things which sute to our Condition, our Station, our Vocation; whereby we may discharge our own Duties, and supply our own Needs; may work benefit to others, or however avoid being any-wise burthensome or troublesome to them; an instance of which practice is immediately subjoined; *to work with our own hands---that we may have lack of no-* ^{1 Thess 3.12.} *thing*; in another place S. Paul calleth it μετ' ἡσυχίας ἐργάζεσθαι, *to work with quiet*, opposing it ~~ᾧ~~ ἐργάζεσθαι, being over-busy, or pragmatically curious,

and to walking disorderly ; that is, beyond the Bounds of our Calling, or the Rules of our Duty ; so as to encroach upon the Rights, or molest the Quiet of others.

The words then as they do imply an Obligation lying upon us to be industrious in our own Business, so they chiefly design to prohibit our meddling with the Concernments of others ; but how to settle the limits between this Quiet minding our own Business, and a culpable neglect of the Duties concerning others ; how to distinguish between meddling innocently, from being blameably meddling, *hic labor, hoc opus est* ; this is that hard task which I am to undertake, but cannot hope thoroughly to perform. However the method toward it, which I shall observe, is this : First, I shall touch some cases in which it is allowable or commendable to meddle with the Affairs of others ; then I shall propound some general Rules, according to which such meddling is commonly blameable ; in the next place I shall assign some Directions proper to some chief and most obvious kinds of meddling ; and lastly, offer some Considerations
to

to dissuade men from this pragmatical humour.

I. Superiors may intermeddle with the Business of their Inferiors, (that is, of such as are subject to their care and charge) in all matters relating to the needful execution of their Office. Magistrates may inspect the carriage, may examine the doings, may reprehend and punish the Offences of their Subjects: Parents may advise, rebuke, and correct their Children; Spiritual Guides and Pastors may admonish and reprove their Flock: These things while (with due prudence, equity, and moderation) they perform, they do indeed *περὶ τὰ ἴδια*, do their own Business; it is their proper work, to which God hath designed them, and which Reason exacteth of them; they are appointed (to use S. Paul's expression) *to attend continually upon this very thing*; their proceedings therefore are not to be charged with culpable Pragmaticalness. Rom 13 6.

2. In any case, wherein the Honour and Interest of God is much concerned, we may interpose in vindication and maintenance of them. If any man

F f 4 dareth

Κοινὸν ἐστὶ τὸ
ἔγκλημα, δη-
μόσιον τὸ ἀδι-
κημα. ἔξεστιν
ἐκείτω ἢ ὁ βε-
λομένων κατη-
γρεῖν. Chrys.
ἀνδρ. α.

Καν ἀκρίβης
τινὲς ἐν ἀμφό-
δῳ, ἢ ἐν ἀγο-
ρᾷ μέση βλασ-
φημῶντες ἢ
θεόν, πρότε-
ρον ἐπιμύουσιν,
καὶ πληγὰς ἐ-
πιβαίνειν δεῖ,
μὴ παρατήσῃς
ῥάπισον αὐτοῦ
τινὲς ὅτι
σύνειπεν αὐ-
τῷ τὸ σῶμα,
ἀγίασον σὲ
τινὲς χεῖρα
ἐκ τῆς πλη-
γῆς &c. Chrys.
Ibid.

dareth to blaspheme God's Name, we may and ought to stand up in its defence; if any man disparageth Religion, we should strive to clear its reputation; if any man impugneth any Divine Truth of moment, we should endeavour to assert it; if any man notoriously transgresseth God's Law, we may discountenance his presumption, and reprove him for it: Every man in such cases, as God's Subject, hath not only a Commission, but an Obligation; is indeed by his Allegiance bound to serve God, in maintaining the honour and interest of his Empire; 'tis foul disloyalty, 'tis pittiful baseness to forbear meddling in such cases. Thus have good Men, without fear or shame, defended Religion, and Truth, against the mightiest Powers, and most dangerous oppositions that could be; Thus stood up Phineas and executed Judgment, Psal. 106. 30. not only checking, but avenging that heinous scandal: Thus Elias maintained the true Worship of God against all the Corrupters of it, the Kings and whole Nation of Israel: Thus the Prophets did not forbear to tax the wicked manners of the Princes, the Priests, and the People

People in their Times : Thus *St. John Baptist* did not stick to reprove King *Herod* for his unlawful practice : So our *Saviour* censured the superstitious and hypocritical *Scribes*, and he chastised the profaners of God's House : So, in fine, the *Holy Apostles* resolutely did assert God's Truth against all the World.

3. When the Publick Weal and Safety are manifestly concerned, we may also intermeddle to support or secure them : So may we rebuke him that slandereth or reproacheth our Prince ; we may check him, that would break the Peace ; we may impeach him that violateth the Laws, conducing to publick welfare : Every Man is a ^{Tertull.} Souldier against Traitors and Enemies of his Country : Every Man is born with a Commission to defend the Publick against those which plot its ruin or harm : Every Man is a Party for his Prince against Rebels, for the Church against Schismatics, for the Law against lawless Transgressors, for common Peace, against those who outragiously disturb it : Duty to our Superiors, Justice and Charity to Mankind, just regard to our own welfare, allow and oblige

oblige us to such meddling.

4. We may also meddle for the succour of Right, against palpable wrong and outrage: We may help an honest Man against a Thief assaulting him; we may guard the life of any Man against an Assassine; we may vindicate the Reputation of an innocent Person aspersed by a slanderous Tongue; as *Acts 7. 24. Moses--seeing one of his Brethren suffer wrong, defended him; and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian*; as the penitent Thief rebuked his Companion, unjustly railing upon our Saviour; the common Interest of Justice and Charity do not only excuse, but commend meddling in such cases.

* Cum moderamine inculpata tuitio.

5. We may likewise meddle with the proceedings of others, when our own just defence requireth it; we may * repel those who attack our safety or peace, who invade or rifle our Goods, who traduce our good Name; we may endeavour to defeat their Plots, and to restrain their Violence: This is indeed doing our own Business, for to preserve our Life with its conveniences and comforts, to maintain our Right and just Interest, to keep our Honour

Honour and Reputation clear from scandal, is incumbent upon us ; we are naturally the Patrons, Advocates, and Guards of those considerable Goods assigned or entrusted to us by Providence.

6. When the life or welfare (either Spiritual or Temporal) of our Neighbour is deeply concerned, and cannot otherwise then by our aid be supported or relieved, we may lawfully interpose to yield it : If we see him exposing his Life to any great hazard, or engaging his Soul into any great sin, we may in any fair way, (by Admonition, Advice, Reproof, politick Device, harmless Force) without any invitation or licence, with or against his will, presume to reclaim or restrain him. We may stop him in his carier to ruin, or grievous mischief ; we may withhold him from running into a Snare, or tumbling down a Precipice, or drinking in Poison ; we may (as S. Jude speaketh) *snatch him out of the Fire*. In such cases we may reasonably suppose, that our Neighbour being himself, will allow us to meddle, or will not be displeased therewith ; if he hath not his wits about him, we may

Jud. 23.
ἐκ τῆς πυρρῆς
ἀφ' αὐτῶν τες.

Invito non tri-
buitur quod-
cumq; pro eo
præstatur.

Reg. 7.

Furiosis nul-
la voluntas est.
R. 7.

Gen. 4. 9.

Μή μοι λέγε τὸ
ψυχρὸν τοῦ
ἔθους. Τι δὲ

μοι μέλει ; ὁ

δὲν ἔχω κοι-

νὸν πρὸς αὐ-

τὸν, &c. Vid.

Chrys. ἀνδρ. I.

& Tom. 2. Or.

59. in Mat. O-

rat. 77, 78.

in Joh. Or. 15.

in Eph. Or. 19.

Chrys. in Tit.

Or. 5. in Hebr.

Or. 30.

may supply him with ours in such exi-
gence ; his present consent and appro-
bation are not then requisite, he not
being in condition to yield them ; he
needeth Guardians, and opportunity
constituteth us in that Office : Extreme
and evident need will not only excuse
the liberty we shall assume, but it ob-
ligeth us to use our power to save him ;
in case of neglect, that surly answer,
Am I my Brothers keeper ? will not
serve our turn. We may, we should,
it is not only innocent, but just and
laudable for us to be watchful over our
Neighbour's concernment and deport-
ment, if we do it out of pure charity,
in a discreet, quiet, and gentle man-
ner.

7. In fine ; If any signal opportu-
nity of doing our Neighbour conside-
rable good, especially to his Soul, doth
offer it self, we may lawfully, we
should in charity embrace it ; we may
then even obtrude upon him our
direction and succour ; if he be so
blind as not to discern our good
will, so peevish as to dislike our
proceeding, so ingrateful as not to
thank us for our pains, yet our good
intent

intent will justifie us before God, and at the Bar of Reason; and we have to countenance us therein, the common example of good Men, who for doing thus, have worthily been accompted the Friends and Benefactors of Mankind.

In these and the like cases we may, without offending, intermeddle; in doing so, we may indeed truly be said to be quiet, and to do our own Business; because there is no exorbitancy or disorder in such proceeding, because God's Law and sound Reason have appropriated these things to us, and made them our concernment: There is no Business more proper or pertinent to us, then that wherein we labour to promote the Glory of God, or to procure the good of Men; this is the principal design of our Being, and therefore Employment therein cannot misbecome us: but we must however in such Cases take heed that our Pretences are real and well-grounded, that our Proceedings are regular and fair; we must not take or use such liberty maliciously; we must never out of hypocritical pretence to the maintenance of God's Honour, of publick Good,

Good, of Justice, Truth, or Peace, be irregularly pragmatical or turbulent; this is to be doubly bad, adding to the irregularity of Offence, the wickedness of Fraud and Malice.

II.

1. We should never (out of ambition, covetous desire, or self-conceit) so meddle as to invade any Man's Office; or to assume the exercise of it. A private Man should not presume to act the Prince or the Statesman; offering to control those who are not under him, to deliberate, debate, determine, or pass censure about political Affairs or Occurrences: A Lay-man should not intrude himself to administer the Sacred Functions of Authoritative Teaching, of dispensing the Sacraments, of exercising Spiritual Censures, of defining Theological Controversies, which are committed to the Guides and Pastors of the Church. No Man should set himself upon the Tribunal to judge, or undertake without licence or invitation to arbitrate the Causes of others: Doing thus, is to encroach upon God, and to usurp upon Man; We encroach upon God, assuming to our selves Powers not derived

rived from his Order, and deserting the Station assigned us by his Providence ; we usurp upon Man, exercising authority over him, which he is not bound to stoop unto.

2. We should not (without Call, or Allowance) meddle with our Superiors, so as to advise them, to reprehend them, to blame or inveigh against their Proceedings ; for this is to confound the right order of things, to trespass beyond the bounds of our Calling and Station ; to do wrong, not only to them, but to the Publick, which is concerned in the upholding their Power and Respect : It is indeed a worse fault then assuming the Ensigns of their Dignity, or counterfeiting their Stamps ; for that is but to borrow the Semblance, this is to enjoy the Substance of their Authority.

Nothing in this busy and licentious Age is more usual, then for private Men to invade the Office, to exercise the Duties, to canvas and control the Actions of their Superiors ; discussing what they ought to do, and prescribing Laws to them ; taxing what is done by them ; murmuring at their Decrees, and inveighing against their Proceedings :

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ings: Every one is finding holes in the State, and picking quarrels with the conduct of Political Affairs: Every one is reforming and settling the Publick according to Models framed in his own Conceit: Things (saith one) are out of order, the Constitution is very defective, and ought to be corrected; such a Law in all reason should be repealed, and such an one enacted: Here our States-men were out of their Politicks, and there our Law-givers failed in point of equity or prudence: No, clamours another no less eagerly, all things stand as well as can be, nothing can be amended, or ought to be altered; our establishment in all respects is more perfect then *Plato's* Common-wealth, or the State of *Eutopia*: Thus doth each Man appoint himself Counsellor of State, and turns Legislator without any Call from the King, or Choice of the Country; every one snatches at the Scepter, and invests himself with the Senator's Robe; Every one acteth a Prince and a Bishop, or indeed is rather a Censor and Controller of both Orders; not considering the wrong he committeth, nor the arrogance he practiseth, nor the mischiefs

chiefs which naturally ensue upon such demeanour ; for to direct, or to check Governours, is in effect to exauctorate or depose them, substituting our selves in their room ; and what greater injury can we do them, or the Publick ? to fix or reverse Laws, belongeth to the highest Authority and deepest Wisdom, which 'tis enormous presumption for us to arrogate to our selves ; by attempting such things, we confound the ranks of Men, and course of things ; we ruffle the World, we supplant Publick Tranquillity ; and what greater mischief then this can we do among Men ?

It is the business and duty of those whom God hath constituted his Representatives and Ministers to deliberate and conclude what is to be done ; and for the due performance of their Charge, they are accountable to their Master, not to us ; *Nobis obsequii gloria relicta est* ; our Duty and our Priviledg, (for so it is, if we could understand it, it being far more easy and safe) it is to submit and obey with quiet and patience ; if we do more, we are therein irregular, and no less undutiful to God, then to our superi-

Tibi summum
rerum judi-
um dii dedere ;
nobis obsequii
gloria relicta
est. *M. Terent.*
apud *Tac.*
ann. V. C.

G g ours;

Ecclef. 8. 4.

1 Pet. 2. 13, 18.

Phil. 2. 14.

2 Pet. 2. 11.

ours ; We forget those Divine Rules and Precepts ; *Where the Word of a King is, there is Power ; and who may say to him, What dost thou ? Submit your selves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake ? Do all things without murmurings, and disputings : We consider not what Judgments are denounced upon those, whose Character it is, to despise Government, to be presumptuous, and self-willed, not to be afraid to speak evil of Dignities.*

We do not weigh the nature of the things we meddle with, nor the advantages of the Persons, whom we tax ; nor our own incapacity to judg rightly about them. There is a kind of sacredness in the Mysteries of State ; as the Mysteries of Faith do surpass natural Reason, so do those of State transcend vulgar Capacity : as Priests by special Grace are qualified best to understand the one ; so are Princes by like peculiar assistance enabled to penetrate the former. He that employeth them in that great Work of governing the World, and maketh them Instruments of his Providence, is not wanting in affording to them direction, and aid needful for the discharge of their

their Duty ; whence their Judgments of things are somewhat more than humane, and their words may with us pass for Oracular ; *A divine Sentence* Prov. 16. 16; *(the wise King said) is in the Lips of the King ; his Mouth transgresseth not in Judgment :* According to the ordinary reason of things they are best able to judg of such things, being, by reason of their eminent station, able to discern more, and farther then others ; having by experience and constant practice acquired a truer insight into things, and a better skill to manage them : whereas we being placed beneath in a Valley, can have no good prospect upon the grounds and causes of their resolutions and proceedings ; we for want of sufficient use and exercise, cannot skill to ballance the contrary weights and reasons of things ; to surmount the difficulties and rubs, to unfold the knots and intrigues, which occur in Affairs of that kind ; we cannot expect those special influences of light and strength from Heaven, toward judging of Affairs, which do not properly concern us : wherefore we are altogether incompetent Judges, and impertinent Dealers about those

G g 2 things,

things ; it is great odds, that in doing so, we shall mistake, and misbehave our selves ; we consequently do vainly and naughtily to meddle with them. If the love of Publick Good doth transport us, let us restrain our selves.

3. We should not indeed so much as meddle with the Affairs of our Equals, (those I mean not who do equal us in dignity or worth, but all such who are not subject to our command or charge, however otherwise inferior to us ; those I say we should not meddle with) so as to control or cross them ; to direct, or check, or censure their proceedings against their will, or without special reason engaging us thereto : for this is also to usurp an undue authority ; this argueth self-conceit ; this containeth immodesty and arrogance.

4. We should not, without the desire or leave of Parties concerned, intermeddle in the smaller Temporal Interests of others, upon pretence to further them, or with design to cross them, for every man should be left to himself to chuse, and to manage his own Business, prosecuting it in the method he best liketh (consistent with Law and Justice towards others) without interruption

ruption or control : Every man hath a right to do so, every man desireth it, every man commonly hath a capacity sufficient for it ; for each man is apt to study his own Business, to weigh his Case, to poise his Abilities, with the Circumstances in which he standeth ; and thence is likely to get righter notions concerning the state of his Affairs, to descry better ways of accomplishing them, then others less regarding them can do : Every man is best acquainted with his own humour and temper, and thence can pick his Business, and wind the management of it, so that it shall comply with them, or not grate upon them. However, as every man in point of interest and honour is most concerned in the success, and suffereth most by frustration of his endeavours, so it is equal that a free choice of his proceedings should be allowed him, without impediment or disturbance ; which enjoying, he will more contentedly bear any disappointment that shall happen. This especially we say, in respect to matters of lesser consequence, such as most worldly Interests are) by the ill success whereof our Neighbour is not extreamly dammaged or

Gg 3

hurt ;

hurt; for in such cases the immodesty and arrogancy of meddling, with the vexation and trouble it is apt to work, do commonly much outweigh any benefit we can presume by our meddling to procure.

5. We should not indeed ever in matters of indifferent and innocent nature so far meddle, as without considerable reason or need, to infringe any mans liberty, to cross his humour, to obstruct his pleasure, however discordant these may be to our Judgment and Palate: Every man hath a particular gust for Diet, for Garb, for Divertisements, and Disports, (arising from particular Complexion, or other unaccountable Causes) and fit it is that he should satisfy it; it is enough, that what he doth seemeth good, and relisheth to himself; if we check him therein, we shall seem impertinent and troublesome, and therefore we shall really be so; for it is not our Office to be Tasters, to be Dressers, to be Masters of the Sports to all Men: we in such Matters would please our own fancy, and therefore we should not about them offend others; 'tis incivility, 'tis injustice to do it.

6. We

6. We should never offer to put a force upon any mans inclination, or strive to bend it unto a compliance with ours ; in attempting that we shall commonly be disappointed, and we shall never come fairly off : for some are so tough, they will never yield to us, none will comply against the grain, without regret and displeasure ; if you extort a compliance with your desire, you thereby do lose their good-opinion and good-will ; for no man liketh to be over-born with violence or importunity.

7. We should not in Conversation meddle so as impose our Opinions and Conceits upon others : In conversation with our Equals, we have a liberty to propound our Judgment, and declare our Reasons for it ; but if our Judgment doth not take, nor our Reasons persuade, we should have done ; to press farther is rude, to be displeased for it is vain, to be angry or violent is unjust ; for by the Law of Conversation every man taketh himself to have an absolute right to use and follow his own Reason ; and he that affects to deprive any man thereof, will pass for a petty Tyrant, a Clown, or an Idiot ;

to retain the satisfaction, which our own perswasion affordeth, is enough to content a just and sober Mind, without triumphing over the understandings of others.

8. We should not ordinarily in converse affect, or undertake to teach ; for this implies a pretence to a kind of superiority, and a preferring our selves to others in wisdom ; which argueth vanity, and is offensive to those with whom we converse ; who care not to be dealt with as Disciples, or Underlings. We may with our Equals modestly dispute the Case, upon even ground, as fellow Students of Knowledge, or Advocates of Truth ; but we must not peremptorily dictate, or pronounce with Authority, like Masters or Judges.

Nec quid agatur in aliâ domus alia per te noverit.
Hier. Ep. 2.

9. We should indeed be cautious of interrupting any Man's Discourse, or of taking his words out of his Mouth : for this is a rude way of dispossessing men of that, which by common Law of society they suppose themselves to enjoy, speaking their mind through, and perfecting their Discourse ; 'tis an implicit accusation of impertinency or weakness in their speech ; 'tis an Argument,

ment, that we deem our selves wiser then they, or able to speak more to the purpose ; it is therefore an unsociable and distastful practice.

10. We should be careful of intrenching upon any mans modesty, in any way, either of commendation or dispraise ; so as to put him to the blush, or to expose him unto scorn ; Sober Men care not to be the Subjects of Talk ; no Man can endure to be the Object of Sport ; we should not therefore thrust any Man upon the Stage ; 'tis vexatious, and therefore always discourteous, sometimes very injurious.

11. It is good to be very staunch and cautious of talking about other Men, and their Concernments, in way of passing Characters on them, or decanting upon their Proceedings for want of other Discourse : This is the common refuge of Idleness, and the practice of fiddling Gossips, who because they will do nothing themselves, must be reflecting upon the doings of others ; and that they may not say nothing, will talk impertinently : *φιλαργίη καὶ ἀσέλγεια*, S. Paul well coupleth

pleth together, that is, frivolous Tatlers and Busy-bodies; *And withal* (saith he of such gossiping Women, *1 Tim. 5. 13.*) *they learn to be idle, wandring about from House to House; and not only idle, but Tatlers also, and Busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not:* To affect talking about others, is indeed a great temptation to speaking things which we ought not to speak; words of unjust and uncharitable obloquy.

Vid. *Chrysost.*
in *Heb. 31. 3.*
Orat. 21.

12. Further; we should not be inquisitive into the Designs of Men; for this (beside the vain curiosity and impertinency of so doing) is to assail their modesty, and an adventure to vex both them and our selves: Thy Neighbour perhaps (as most advised Men are) is desirous to keep his purpose close to himself; then by inquiry thou either forcest him unwillingly to disclose what he would not, or to give thee a repulse, which he liketh not to do; and which when-ever he doth, he is displeased; what is pumped out, comes up against nature, and bringeth regret with it; and if we cannot get any thing out, we yet cause disturbance within;

Percontatorem
fugito.

φιλονεικία ἢ
ἐν ἀποκρύψει.

within; and our selves are not well satisfied in the disappointment.

13. We should not press into the Retirements of Men; to do so, is not only immodest, and rude, but unjust: 'tis immodest to desire to know from any Man, what he is ashamed or unwilling to shew: 'tis rude to disturb any Man in the enjoiment of his lawful freedom, to interrupt him in his conversation with himself, to obstruct his private satisfactions: 'tis unjust to bereave a Man of that leisure and opportunity which he possesseth, of doing that which he best liketh, and perhaps is greatly concerned in; of enjoying his own Thoughts, of meditating upon his Concerns, of examining his ways, of composing his Passions, of studying Truth, of devotion and intercourse with his God; of contriving and carrying on in any wise the welfare of his own Soul. Why doth he retire, but to shun diversion, or that he may be master of his time and thoughts? why then are we so unkind, or so unjust, as to deprive him of those contents and advantages.

*Arcanum neq;
tu scrutaberis
ullius unquam,
Comissumq;
teges, & vino
tortus & irā.*

14. We

14. We should not pry, or peep into mens secrets ; it is a practice upon many accòmpts blameable.

It is commonly impertinent curiosity ; for men hide things, because they do not think others concerned to know them ; the concealment argueth their Opinion to be such ; and consequently that he is fondly curious

Τὸ τὸ Ἀγνοῦ-
πεχάειν. πρὸς
τὸ ἐρωτῶντα π
φέρει συγκεκ-
λυμμένον, διὰ
τὸ το συγκεκ-
λυταί. Plur.
πρὸς πολυτα.

who would search into them : *Why* (said he well to one, who seeing him carry a Basket covered, did ask what was in it) *dost thou seek to know, when thou seest it covered, that thou mayest not know ?*

It is foully discourteous, because offensively depriving men of the satisfaction they take in concealing their matters ; encroaching upon the innocent freedoms which they would enjoy, without rendring accòmpt to any ; trespassing upon their bashfulness, or frustrating their discretion ; for therefore men chuse to keep things close, because they like not, or judg it not expedient to declare them. *Eccles. 7. 21. Take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy Servant curse thee.*

It

It is also grossly injurious to deal thus ; for it is a robbery of what is most dear to men ; which they with more care reserve and guard, then they do their Gold, or their Jewels ; so that to break open the Closet of a Man's Breast, to ransack his Mind, to pilfer away his Thoughts, his Affections, his Purposes, may well be deemed a worse sort of Burglary or Theft, then to break open Doors, to rifle Trunks, or to pick Pockets.

It is a practice in the common opinion of Men worthily esteemed very dishonest and treacherous ; for Men generally do suppose each other to be under a *tacit*, but well understood compact, obliged mutually (as they tender greatly the retaining their own Secrets, so) to abstain from attempting to discover the Secrets of others ; to do otherwise, is therefore taken for an act of perfidious enmity, and a violation of mutual confidence.

In fine ; to peep into Chinks, to listen at Doors, or Windows, to mind Whispers, to dive into Letters and Papers, and the like practices, are the practices of insidious Evesdroppers, Spies, and Sycophants, which common
humanity

humanity will not endure.

Yea, if the knowledg of what our Neighbour would conceal, doth casually arrive to us, it is adviseable to smother it, 'tis inhumanity to reveal it to his prejudice. *To reveal Secrets*, is a practice condemned in Scripture as odious and base; Prov. 20. 9. *He that goeth about as a Tale-bearer, revealeth Secrets.* Prov. 11. 13. *A Tale-bearer revealeth Secrets; but he that is of a faithful Spirit concealeth the matter.*

Not to take up, or scatter reports prejudicial, *Ecclus* 19. 7, 10.

Μηδέποτε
δευτέρως
λόγον—'Ακή-
κοας λόγον·
συναποθανέτο
σι.

Philippides a-
pud Plut. in
Aporth. ad
Lyfimachum:
πνός σοι, εἴπεν,
ἢ ἐμὼν με-
ταδῶ; κακεί-
νῳ. ἔ, βέλει
πλὴν ἢ ἀ-
περήτων.

A wise Man would not willingly any-
wise know the secrets of others, but
gladly would shun them, although of-
fering themselves to his knowledg;
that he may be freed from the burthen
of keeping them, and the danger of
venting them, to the distaste, wrong or
prejudice of others; and he is com-
mended for his discretion, who to a
Prince asking him *what of his he should*
impart to him? replied, *What-ever you*
please, except your Secrets; them he well
thought unsafe to keep, and dangerous
to utter; How foolish then is it vo-
luntarily to intrude, or carefully to
search into them.

15. We should not lie in wait to surprize, or catch any Man at advantage, to overthrow him when he trips, to insult upon his mistake, or his disaster ; to do thus, is always ill manners, 'tis sometimes barbarous inhumanity. Goodness in such cases would dispose a Man to support, relieve, and comfort another, if he demandeth, or his case needeth such meddling.

16. Lastly ; We should never, at least with much earnestness, meddle with Affairs, more properly belonging to others, and which we do not, or may not handsomely pretend to understand so well as others: such are Affairs beside our Profession, which if we understand not, 'tis a folly, in a peremptory manner, to treat of them ; if we do understand them, 'tis yet undecent to contest or dictate about them, in the presence at least of those who profess them: thus should private men beware (at least in that magisterial or eager way) to meddle with Political Affairs, illiterate Men with Scholastical, Laymen with Theological, unexperienced Men with any such matters, the comprehension whereof dependeth upon Skill and Exercise ; no Man should be forward

forward to meddle with things extraneous to his way and calling: doing so, is wont to create much offence, it hath usually much immodesty and much folly in it; often it containeth much injustice.

These are some more general Rules concerning the matter in hand, I should now (if time did permit) insist upon some particular kinds of Medling, (*Advice, Reproof, Interposing in Contests*) but in regard to your patience, I shall proceed no further at present.

The



The Tenth Sermon.

I THESS. 4. 11.

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own Business.

IN a former Discourse upon these words, I have already shewed;

- I. In what cases it is allowable or commendable to meddle with the Affairs of others.
- II. Next, I propounded some general Rules concerning this matter, according to which we may discern in what cases meddling with the Affairs of others is commonly blameable. Thus far I have proceeded ;

H h

III. I

III. I shall now give some Directions concerning particular kinds of meddling. And because they are many, I shall at present only insist upon three, (referring others to other occasions) they are, *Advice*, *Reproof*, *Interposing in Contests*, and *Contentions*.

I. As to meddling in *Advice*, we may do well to observe these Directions,

1. Advise not (except upon Call) a Superior, or one more eminent than thy self in Authority, in Dignity, or in Age: for he that offereth to advise, doth thereby claim to himself a kind of superiority, or excellence, above another; and it is not well consistent with the reverence and respect due to our betters to seem to do so: they should be wiser than we, at least it becometh us not to declare we think they are not; If they ask Advice, we may without presumption give it, supposing it to be not so much their defect of Knowledge, as prudent Caution, which maketh them willing to hear what any man can say to the Case; but to obtrude it
on

on them, argueth we think them to need it, and our selves able to direct them, which is presumption, and will pass for arrogance.

2. We should not indeed, with any violence or importunity, thrust Advice upon our Equals, or upon any Man not subject to our charge, who is unwilling to receive it; for this is also an exalting our selves in skill and wisdom above him, and implieth a contemptuous opinion concerning his Knowledg; that he is so weak as to need Advice, and yet more weak in not seeking it when needful from us; which practice consisteth not with modesty, and needs must breed offence, it is indeed unjust; for every Man of right is to be allowed to act by his own Advice, and to chuse his own Counsellors.

3. Be not obstinate in pressing Advice; if he that asketh thy counsel, do not like it, desist from urging farther, and rest content: If thou hast performed the part of a faithful Friend, of a good Man, of a charitable Christian in advising what seemed best to thee, that may abundantly satisfie thee; for the rest *ipse viderit*, 'tis his concernment more then thine: If thou pre-

Hh 2 tendest

tendest that he must follow thy Advice, or art displeased because he doth not so, thou makest thy self a Commander, not a Counsellor ; the which to appoint thee, was beside his intention ; he meant to seek thy help, not to forfeit his own liberty ; and thou art not just in pretending to so much.

4. Affect not to be a Counsellor, nor let any Considerations (except of Friendship, Humanity, or Charity) easily dispose thee to accept the Office ; it is not worth the while to undertake it as a matter of Reputation, or because it seemeth to argue a good opinion concerning thy skill and ability ; for it is a critical and dangerous thing to advise ; because if the Business succeedeth well according to thy Advice, the Principal usually carrieth away the Profit, and the Praise ; his Judgment, his Industry, his Fortune, are applauded ; little commendation or benefit accrue to the Counsellor ; but if it prosper not, the main weight of blame is surely laid upon him that advised the course ; If you (saith the Party, and say the lookers on) had not thus directed, it had not thus fallen out.

5. Where-

5. Wherefore it is commonly expedient not to advise otherwise then with reservation and diffidence: 'Tis, we may say, the most probable course I know, but I question whether it will succeed; I hope well of it, but do not thoroughly confide therein; this modest and discreet way, what-ever the event shall be, will shelter thee from blame; yea, will advance the reputation of thy sagacity; for if it fail, thy Reason to suspect will be approved; if it prosper, the goodness of thy Judgment will be applauded: whereas the confident Director, if Success croseth his Advice, is exclaimed upon for his rashness; if Success favoureth, he is not yet admired for his wisdom, because he seemed to be sure; it being more admirable to guess the best among doubtful things, then to determine that which is certain. So much for meddling about *Advice*.

II. For *Reproof*, (which is necessary, and a Duty upon some Occasions) we may do well to follow these Directi-
ons.

I. Reprove not a Superior; for 'tis exercising a power over him, and a
H h 3 punish-
Levit. 19. 17.
Ephes. 5. 11.

punishing him; we thereby therefore do soar above our pitch, we confound Ranks, and pervert the Order settled among men; the practice containeth irreverence, and presumption; it seemeth injurious, and is ever odious. What the Ministers of God, or Spiritual Pastors do in this kind, they do it by special commission or instinct, (as the Prophets in reprehending Princes and Priests, as *St. John Baptist* in reproving *Herod*); Or as ordinary Superiors in the case of Spiritual Guidance, being set over us for that purpose, and watching for our Souls, for which they must render an account; yet they must do it with great moderation and discretion: *πρὸς εὐτέρω μὴ ἐπιπλήξῃς*, *Rebuke not an Elder*, (or one more aged than thy self) but entreat him as a Father, (that is, advise him in the most respectful and gentle manner) is the charge of *S. Paul* to *B. Timothy*. In case of grievance, or scandal, it becometh Inferiors not proudly or peremptorily to criminate and tax, but humbly to remonstrate and supplicate for redress.

2. Reprove not rashly, and without certain cognizance of the Fact; for to re-
prove

Heb. 13. 17.

1 Tim. 5. 1.

prove for things not done, or (which in moral reckoning is the same) for things not apparent, is both unjust, and argueth a malignant disposition: 'tis unjust to punish so much as the modesty of any Man without clear evidence and proof; 'tis malignity to suspect a Man of ill, 'tis calumny to charge blame on him upon slender pretences, or doubtful surmises.

3. Reprove not also rashly as to the point of right, or without being able to convince the Matter to be assuredly culpable: to reprove for things not bad, or not unquestionably such (for things that are, or perhaps may be indifferent and innocent) is also unjust, and signifieth a tyrannical disposition: 'tis unjust any-wise to punish a Man, without clear warrant of Law; 'tis tyrannical to impose upon Men our conceit, or to persecute them for using their Liberty, following their Judgment, or enjoying their Humour; which in effect we do, when we reprovethem for that, which we cannot prove blameable: 'Tis (S. James saith) *a judging the Law*, or charging it with James 4. 11. defect, when we condemn Persons for things not prohibited by it: *He* (saith

Hh 4

the

the Apostle) that speaketh against his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh against the Law, and judgeth the Law.

Both these kinds of rash Reproof are very inconvenient, as breeding needless Offence, and endless Contention; for who-ever is thus taxed, will certainly take it ill, and will contend in his own defence; no man patiently, for no sufficient cause or sure ground, will lie under the stroak of Reproof, which always smarteth, but then enrageth, when it is supposed to be inflicted unjustly or maliciously: Even those who contentedly will bear friendly Reproof, can worst brook to be causlessly taxed.

4. Reprove not for slight matters; for such faults or defects as proceed from natural frailty, from inadvertency, from mistake in matters of small consequence: for it is hard to be just in such Reproof; or so to temper it, as not to exceed the measure of blame due to such faults; they occur so often, that we should never cease to be carping, if we do it upon such occasions; 'tis not worth the while, 'tis not handsome to seem displeased with such
little

Mitem animi
mores, & mores
modicis erroribus
æquos.
Fav. Sat. 14.

little things ; 'tis spending our Artillery upon a Game not worth the killing : Reproof is too grave and stately a thing to be prostituted upon so mean things ; to use it upon small cause, derogateth from its weight, when there is considerable reason for it ; Friendship, Charity, and Humanity, should cover such Offences. In fine ; It is unseemly to reprove Men for such things as all Men, as themselves are so continually subject unto : It is therefore better to let such things pass without any mark of displeasure or dislike.

5. Reprove not unseasonably ; not when a Person is indisposed to bear reproof, or unfit to profit thereby ; not, when there is likely to be no good effect come from it ; when thou shalt only thereby conjure up an evil spirit of displeasure and enmity against thy self. Reproof is a thing of it self not good or pleasant, but sometimes needful, because wholesome, and good in order to the end ; it should therefore be administered as Physick ; then only, when the Patient is fit to receive it, and it may serve to correct his Distemper ; otherwise you will only make him more sick, and very angry.

'Tis

Prov. 9. 7. 8.
 & 15. 12.

Matt. 7. 6.

'Tis ever almost unseasonable to reprove some Persons ; as scorers, impudent, incorrigibly profligate Persons ; who will hate the Reprover, without regarding the Reproof ; *He that reproveth a Scorer, getteth to himself shame ; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a Scorer, lest he hate thee.* To be maligned, to be derided, to be aspersed with reproach and slander, is all one shall get by reprovng such Persons ; it is both prostituting good Advice, and exposing ones self to mischief ; as our Saviour intimateth in that prohibition ; *Give not that which is Holy unto Dogs, neither cast your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.*

As such Men ever, so most Men in some Seasons are incapable of Reproof ; so are Men in calamity, who are discomposed by grief, the which is rather to be mitigated by comfort, then encreased and exasperated by blame ; so are Men in a passion, who have no Ears to hear, no Reason to judg, no Will to comply with Advice : Reproof is apt to produce rather anger and ill-blood, then any contrition
 on

on or kindly remorse in Persons so affected.

It is also usually not seasonable to reprove Men publicly, when their modesty is highly put to it, and their reputation grievously suffereth; for this is an extream sort of punishment, and is taken for needless; 'tis extream, because men had rather suffer any way, then in their honour; 'tis deemed needless, because it may be ministred privately.

6. Reprove mildly and sweetly; in the calmest manner, in the gentlest terms; not in a haughty or imperious way, not hastily or fiercely; not with fowr looks, or in bitter Language; for these ways do beget all the evil, and hinder the best Effects of Reproof: They do certainly enflame and disturb the Person reprov'd; they breed wrath, disdain, and hatred against the Reprover; but do not so well enlighten the Man to see his Error, or affect him with kindly sence of his miscarriage, or dispose him to correct his Fault; such Reproofs look rather like the Wounds and Persecutions of Enmity, then as Remedies ministred by a friendly hand; they harden Men with
stomach

stomach and scorn to mend upon such occasion. If Reproof doth not savour of Humanity, it signifieth nothing ; it must be like a bitter Pill wrapt in Gold, and tempered with Sugar, otherwise it will not go down, or work effectually.

7. Affect not to be reprehensive ; seem not willingly to undertake the place of a Reprover ; appear to be meerly drawn thereto by sense of Duty, or exigency of Friendship, or constraint of Charity and Good-will. For to affect reproving, is a sign of ill-nature and arrogance ; that we delight to observe the Faults, that we love to insult upon the Infirmities and Infelicities of other Men ; which is the part of a domineering and cruel humour. A truly good Man indeed would be glad to be excused from the Office ; it is the most unpleasant thing he can do to be raking in Mens Sores, and causing smart to his Neighbours ; far more gladly would he be commending their good Deeds, and cherishing their Vertue ; nothing therefore but Conscience and Charity can put him on this Employment. But so much for meddling in Reproof.

III. Ano-

III. Another kind of meddling is, *Interposing in the Contests*, and Contentions of others. As to this, we may, briefly, do well to observe these Directions.

1. We should never meddle, so as to raise Dissentions, or to do such things which breed them; we should by no means create misunderstandings, or distastes between our Neighbours; we should not instil Jealousies, or Surmises; we should not misconstrue Words or Actions, to an offensive sense or consequence; we should not convey spiteful Tales; we should not disclose the Secrets of one to another: these practices engender enmity and strife among Men; and are therefore inhumane, or rather Diabolical; for the Devil is the great Make-bate in the World.

2. We should not foment Dissentions already commenced; blowing up the Coals that are kindled, by abetting the strife, or aggravating the causes thereof; it is not good to strengthen the Quarrel, by siding with one part, except that part be notoriously oppressed

fed or abused ; in such a case indeed, when Justice calling for them, we may lend our advice and assistance ; and may bear the inconvenience of being engaged ; as *Moses* honestly and generously did, when he succoured his Brother that suffered wrong ; otherwise 'tis adviseable to keep our selves out of the Fray ; that we do not encourage it by our taking part, and involve our selves in the mischiefs of it.

3. Especially we should not make our selves Parties in any Faction, where both sides are eager and passionate ; for then even they who have the juster cause, are wont to do unjust things, in which 'tis hard for any Man engaged not to have share, at least not to undergo the imputation of them : 'tis wisdom therefore in such cases to hold off, and to retain a kind of indifferency ; to meddle in them is, (as the *Wise Man* saith) to *take a Dog by the Ears* ; which he that doth, can hardly take care enough of his Fingers.

Prov. 26. 7.

4. We should not interpose our selves (without invitation) to be Arbitrators in Points of Difference : We may cautiously mediate perhaps, or
advise

advise to Agreement ; but not pretend as Judges with Authority to decide the Controversy ; this favoureth of arrogance ; this will work trouble to us, and bring the displeasure of both sides upon us ; it is hard in doing so, to avoid becoming Parties, and offending one side : Our Lord therefore did, we see, wave this Office, and put off the invitation, with a, *Who made me a Divider, or a Judg between you ?*

οἱ ἐν μέσῳ ὄν-
τες ὡδέντας
ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρῃ
παρ. Arist.

5. If we would at all meddle in these Cases, it should be only in endeavouring, by the most fair and prudent means, to renew Peace, and reconcile the Dissenters ; if we can by exhortation and persuation to Peace, by removing misprisions, by representing things handsomly, by mitigating their passions, bring them to good terms ; this is a laudable meddling, this is a blessed practice. So I leave this particular, and finish the directive part of my Discourse.

IV. I shall now further only briefly propose some Considerations inducing to Quietness, and dissuasive from Pragmaticalness ; such as arise from the Nature, Properties, Causes, and Effects of

of each; serving to commend the one, and disparage the other.

1. Consider that Quietness is just and equal, Pragmaticalness is injurious. When we contain our selves quiet, and mind only our own Business, we allow every Man his Right, we harm no Man's Reputation; we keep our selves within our bounds, and trespass not on the Place or Interest of our Neighbour; we disturb not the right order and course of things: but in being pragmatical, we do wrongfully deprive others of their right and liberty to manage their Business; we prejudice their Credit, implicitly charging them with weakness, and incapacity to dispatch their Affairs without our direction; we therefore upon our own unequal and partial Judgment, do prefer and advance our selves above them; we assume to our selves in many respects more then our due, withdrawing it from others. In fine; No Man loveth that others should invade his Office, or intrude into his Business; therefore in justice every Man should forbear doing so toward others.

2. Qui-

2. Quietness signifieth Humility, Modesty, and Sobriety of Mind; that we conceit not our selves more wise then our Neighbour, that we allow every Man his share of discretion; that we take others for able and skilful enough to understand and manage their own Affairs, but pragmatikallness argueth much over-weaning and arrogance; that we take our selves for the only Men of Wisdom, at least for more wise then those, into whose Business we thrust our selves.

3. Quietness is beneficial to the World, preserving the general order of things, disposing Men to keep within their rank and station; and within the sphere of their power and ability; regularly attending to the Work and Business proper to them; whereby as themselves do well, so the Publick doth thrive; but pragmatikallness disturbeth the World, confounding things; removing the distinction between Superior, Inferior, and Equal rendring each Man's Business uncertain; while some undertake that which belongeth

I i

not

not to them: One busy-body often (as we find by experience) is able to disturb and pester a whole Society.

4. Quietness preserveth Concord and Amity; for no Man is thereby provoked, being suffered undisturbedly to proceed in his course, according to his mind and pleasure: but Pragmaticallness breedeth Dissentions and Fews; for all Men are ready to quarrel with those, who offer to control them, or cross them in their way; every Man will be zealous in maintaining his priviledg of chusing and acting according to his choice; and cannot but oppose those, who attempt to bereave him of it; whence between the busy-body assailing, and others defending, their Liberty, Combustions must arise.

5. Quietness to the Person endued with it, or practising it, begetteth tranquillity and peace; for he that letteth others alone, and cometh in no Man's way, no Man will be apt to disquiet or cross him; he keepeth himself

self out of Broils and Factions; but the Busy-body createth vexation and trouble to himself; others will be ready to molest him in his proceedings, because he disturbeth them in theirs: He that will have a Sickle in anothers Corn, or an Oar in every Man's Boat, no wonder if his Fingers be rapped; Men do not more naturally brush off Flies, which buz about their Ears, sit upon their Faces or Hands, and sting or tickle them; then they strive to drive away clamourous, and encroaching Busy-bodies. *Let (saith S. Peter) none of you suffer as a Busy-body in other mens matters;* it is, he intimateth, a practice whereby a Man becometh liable to suffer, or which Men are apt to punish soundly: and so the *Wise Man*, implying the fondness and danger of it; *He (saith he) that passeth by, and medleth with strife not belonging to him, is like one that taketh a Dog by the Ears;* that is, without any probable good effect, he provoketh a Creature that will snarl at him, and bite him. 1 Pet. 4. 15. Prov. 26. 17.

6. Quietness is a decent and lovely thing, as signifying good disposition,
11 2 and

and producing good effects ; but Pragmaticalness is ugly and odious. Every Man gladly would be Neighbour to a quiet Person, as who by the steady calmness and smoothness of his humour, the inoffensive stillness and sweetness of his demeanour, doth afford all the pleasure of Conversation, without any cross or trouble. But no Man willingly would dwell by him, who is apt ever to be infesting him by his turbulent humour, his obstreperous talk, his tumultuous and furious carriage ; who upon all occasions, without invitation or consent, will be thrusting in his Eyes, his Tongue, his Hand ; prying into all that is done, dictating this or that course, taxing all proceeding, usurping a kind of jurisdiction over him and his actions ; no Man will like, or can well endure such a Neighbour. It is commonly observed, that Pride is not only abominable to God, but loathsome to Man ; and of all Prides, this is the most offensive and odious : for the Pride which keepeth at home, within a Man's heart or fancy, not issuing forth to trouble others, may indeed well be despised,

despised, as hugely silly and vain ; but that which breaketh out to the disturbance and vexation of others, is hated, as molestful and mischievous.

7. Quietness adorneth any Profession, bringing credit, respect, and love thereto ; but Pragmaticalness is scandalous, and procureth *odium* to any Party or Cause : Men usually do cloak their pragmatical behaviour with pretences of Zeal for publick Good, or of kindness to some Party, which they have espoused ; but thereby they do really cast reproach, and draw prejudice upon their side ; if it be a good Cause, they do thereby wrong it, making it to partake of the blame, incident to such carriage, as if it did produce or allow disorder ; if it be a bad Cause, they wrong themselves, aggravating the guilt of their adherence thereto ; for it is a less fault to be calm and remiss in an ill-way, then busy or violent in promoting it. Nothing hath wrought more prejudice to Religion, or hath brought more disparagement upon Truth, then boisterous and unseasonable Zeal ; pretending in
I i 3 ways

1 Pet. 3. 4.

ways of passion, of fierceness, of rudeness, to advance them: A quiet Sectary doth to most Mens fancy appear more lovely, then he that is furiously and factiously Orthodox: The Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, is (saith S. Peter) in God's sight of great price; and it is also very estimable in the Opinion of Men.

Τὸ ὄντι φαίνε-
ται ὁ κτῆ τιμὴ
ἡσυχίας ἐν
ἀκινδυνόν τι
καὶ ἀσφαλές ἔ-
χειν. Chrys.
apud Plot de
Eccl. contr.

8. Quiet is a safe practice; keeping Men not only from needless encumbrances of Business, but from the hazards of it, or being charged with its bad success: but Pragmaticalness is dangerous; for if things go ill, the Medler surely will be loaded with the blame; the profit, and commendation of Prosperities will accrue to the Persons immediately concerned; but the disaster and damage will be imputed to those who meddled in the Business; to excuse or ease themselves, Men will cast the disgrace on those who did project, or further the undertaking: He therefore that would be secure; let him be quiet; he that loveth peril and trouble, let him be pragmatical.

9. It

9. It is consequently a great point of discretion to be quiet; it yielding a Man peace and safety, without any trouble; and it is a manifest folly to be Pragmatical, it being only with care, pains, and trouble to seek dissatisfaction to others, and danger to himself; it being also to affect many not only inconveniencies, but impossibilities.

Is it possible for any Man to grasp, or compass an infinity of Business? yet this the Pragmatical Man seemeth to drive at; for the Businessses of other Men are infinite; and into that Abyss he plungeth himself, who passeth beyond his own bounds; by the same reason that he medleth with any beside his own, he may undertake all the Affairs in the World; so he is sure to have work enough; but Fruit surely little enough of his pains.

Is it imaginable, that we can easily bring others to our bent, or induce Men to submit their Business to our judgement and humour? Will not he that attempteth such things, assuredly expose himself to disappointment

ment and regret? Is it not therefore wisdom to let every Man have his own way, and pursue his Concernments without any check or control from us?

10. We may also consider, that every Man hath Business of his own sufficient to employ him; to exercise his mind, to exhaust his care and pains, to take up all his time and leisure: To study his own near Concernments, to provide for the necessities and conveniencies of his Life, to look to the Interests of his Soul, to be diligent in his Calling, to discharge faithfully and carefully all his Duties relating to God and Man, will abundantly employ a Man; well it is if some of them do not encumber and distract him; he that will set himself with all his might to perform these things, will find enough to do; he need not seek farther for work, he need not draw more trouble on him.

Seeing then every Man hath burthen enough on his shoulders, imposed by God and Nature, it is vain to take on him more load, by engaging himself

Ὁ πλεῖστα
πράων πλε-
σθ' αἰμαρτάνει
βοσφῇ. Eurip.

ἀπεργυμνασ-
σέναι ἐκκλί-
νεν γὰρ τὸ χε-
ρὶν. Zenon.
apud Laert.
Chryl. Tom. 2.
Eph. 64.

self in the Affairs of others; he will thence be forced, either to shake off his own Business, or to become overburthened and oppressed with more than he can bear. It is indeed hence observable, and it needs must happen, that those who meddle with the Business of others, are wont to neglect their own; they that are much abroad, can seldom be at home; they that know others most, are least acquainted with themselves; And the wise Hebrew, Eccl. 38. 26. *The wisdom of a learned man comes by opportunity of leisure,* (σοφία σοφιστῶν ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ σχολῆς) *and he that hath little Business shall be wise;* (ὁ ἐλασσόμενος προΐξει αὐτῷ σοφιστικαί.) Whence it is scarce possible that a pragmatical Man should be a good Man; that is, such an one, who honestly and carefully performeth the Duties incumbent on him.

Philosophers therefore generally have advised Men to shun needless Occupations, as the certain impediments of a good and happy Life; they bid us endeavour ἀπλῶς ἑαυτοὺς, *to simplify our selves,* or to get into a condition requiring of us the least that

Ὁ σοφὸς, ἰδὼς
πράγματων, καὶ
ἀπράγματων.
Demiocr.

Sen. Ep. 72, 22.

Tertullian
callesh Stoicis-
me, quieta
Magisterium.
de pall. 5.

2 Tim. 2. 4.

Luk. 10. 41.
πυλάζῃ αὐτὴ
πολλὰ.

Omniū oc-
cupatorum
conditio mise-
ra est, eorum
tamen miser-
rima, qui nē
suis quidem
occupationi-
bus laborant.
Sen. de Brev.
Vitæ. 19.

that can be to do; S. Paul intended the same, when he advised us *μὴ ἐμ-πλέεσθαι ταῖς τῷ βίῃ πράγματεσσις*, *not to be entangled in the negotiations of Life*; and our Saviour, when he touch-*ed Martha for being troubled about many things*: So far therefore we should be from taking in hand the Affairs of other Men, that we should labour to contract our own, and reduce them to the fewest that we can; otherwise we shall hardly attain Wisdom, or be able to perform our Duty.

Tacitus saith
of the Stoicks
Self, — quæ
turbidos &
negotiorum
appetentes fa-
cit.

VII. But suppose us to have much spare time, and to want Business; so that we are to seek for divertisement, and must for relief fly to curiosity; yet is it not adviseable to meddle with the Affairs of other Men; there are divers other ways more innocent, more safe, more pleasant, more advantagi-*ous to divert our selves, and satisfy curiosity.*

Nature offereth her self, and her in-
exhaustible store of appearances to
our contemplation; we may, without
any harm, and with much delight, sur-
vey her rich Varieties, examine her
Pro-

Proceedings, pierce into her Secrets; Every kind of Animals, of Plants, of Minerals, of Meteors presenteth Matter, wherewith innocently, pleasantly, and profitably to entertain our minds: There are many noble Sciences, by applying our minds to the study whereof, we may not only divert them, but improve and cultivate them: The Histories of Ages past, or relations concerning Forreign Countries, wherein the manners of men are described, and their Actions reported, may afford us useful pleasure and pastime; thereby we may learn as much, and understand the World as well, as by the most curious inquiry into the present Actions of men; there we may observe, we may scan, we may tax the proceedings of whom we please without any danger or offence: There are extant numberless Books, wherein the wisest and most ingenious of men have laid open their hearts, and exposed their most secret Cogitations unto us; in perusing them we may sufficiently busy our selves, and let our idle hours pass gratefully, we may meddle with our selves, studying our own dispositions, examining

mining our principles and purposes, reflecting on our thoughts, words, and actions; striving thoroughly to understand our selves; to do this, we have an unquestionable right, and by it we shall obtain vast benefit, much greater then we can hope to get by puddering in the designs or doings of others. Pragmaticalness then, as it is very dangerous and troublesome, so it is perfectly needless; it is a kind of idleness, but of all idleness the most unreasonable: It is at least worse then idleness,

Ἄρδεις Ἀυτὸς
 πρὸς γυμνασίαν
 ἢ, ἀλλ' αὐ-
 τὸς ἐξελθὼν ἐ-
 κείῳ. Adag.
 apud Suidam.

Ἄρδεις εἶναι
 μᾶλλον τοῦ δι-
 ούσθαι, ἢ ποιεῖ-
 σθαι. Greg.
 Naz. Or. 26.

in S. Gregory Nazianzen's Opinion: for, *I had rather, said he, be idle more then I should, then over-busy.* Other Considerations might be added, but these I hope may be sufficient to restrain this practice, so unprofitable and uneasy to our selves, and for the most part so injurious and troublesome to others.

Now the God of Peace, make us perfect in every good word and work, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

FINIS.



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